

Classic Maya Polities *of the Southern Lowlands*

INTEGRATION, INTERACTION, DISSOLUTION



EDITED BY

Damien B. Marken and James L. Fitzsimmons

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Classic Maya Polities
of the Southern Lowlands

Problems relating to the size, juxtaposition, and boundedness of social integration in the eastern lowlands remind us that the social scientist must be theoretically and empirically equipped to deal systematically with scale factors. He or she must be able to detect relationships among variables operating at the household level, through the local and regional levels, up to the 250,000 km² macroregion, and in Mesoamerica as a whole. One must see how actions at one level might accumulate into stresses that are dealt (or not) at the next level. One must be able to specify how many households, over what area, were altered [if at all] because of higher-level changes. (Blanton et al. 1981:178)

For nearly a century, discussions of Classic Maya political organization have been dominated by various forms of the same debate: to what degree were Maya polities centralized or decentralized? The collected authors examine the premises, strengths, and weaknesses of these two perspectives while strongly advocating a move beyond this largely sterile debate. The relatively recent proliferation of archaeological investigation into the functional makeup of preindustrial states and complex polities has increasingly demonstrated the highly dynamic and variable nature of these ancient political and social units (e.g., Bernbeck 2008; Campbell 2009; Glatz 2009; Janusek 2008; Pauketat 2001; Smith 2005).

Despite the advance in our understanding of Classic Maya political interaction gained by the decipherment of the hieroglyphic record, scholars remain largely unsuccessful in describing and modeling what a Classic Maya polity actually looked like on the ground. This volume is the outgrowth of a roundtable held in the fall of 2009 at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, DC. Both the roundtable and the volume bring together a group of younger scholars actively investigating Maya political and social structure in the southern lowlands to assess, compare, and interpret the wide variation in Classic period Maya polity and city composition, development, and integration. Focusing on convergences (and divergences) among household, settlement, and epigraphic data in various areas of the Maya world, the chapters in this volume explore several avenues contributing to a more complete comprehension of what constituted Classic Maya political units. Recurring themes discussed range from internal polity identities and organization to polity boundaries and larger extra-polity networks. From this fundamental starting point, the ways political interactions between polities were structured—including their social and historical consequences—can be more accurately studied. Until we better understand how the internal building blocks of polity articulated, interpretations of larger-scale political interaction will remain flawed. The chapters in this volume represent a significant step in that direction.

THEORIZING POLITY

So how exactly is the term *polity* to be defined? At its simplest, “polity” can be defined as an autonomous, although not necessarily independent, political unit with some form of a spatially centralized authority structure. In recent years, many social scientists have adopted a similarly broad definition as a more neutral and less loaded alternative to “the state.” Few archaeologists would deny guilt at having employed the term *polity* in conversations of ancient statecraft. We feel, however, that the theoretical concept of polity has more to offer archaeological reconstructions of sociopolitical change than simply an alternate signifier for “the state.” More specifically, cross-cultural comparison of a wide variety of political formations can help model a continuum of Classic Maya polity size, form, organization, and history.

In the social sciences, the term *polity* is originally derived from the Archaic and Classical Greek concept of *polis*. At times misrepresented as a unilateral equivalent to the Western concept of “city-state,” the Greek *polis* is more accurately described as a specific form, or type, of city-state (see Hansen 2000a).

Anthropologically defined as a small, self-governing (though again not necessarily independent) state composed of a capital and its surrounding hinterland, the *polis* has two primary, though overlapping and interrelated, meanings in Classical descriptions of Greek political geography. Mogens Hansen (2006:56) notes that in written sources a *polis* was simultaneously conceived as a settlement *and* a community, though both meanings encompassed multiple potential sub-meanings (depending on context).¹ This duality highlights the fact that the *poleis* of Archaic and Classical Greece were not simply political communities but the convergence of specific forms of political, religious, economic, and social organization and integration (ibid.:115). As Hansen (ibid.:146) concludes: “The two most important aspects of the *polis* were its small size and *the unbreakable connection between town and state*. With very few possible exceptions, every *polis*-town with its hinterland was a *polis*-state, and every *polis*-state was centered on a *polis*-town. Most of the other essential features follow from these two characteristics” (emphasis added).

While there are definite similarities (particularly in size) and differences between *poleis* and Mesoamerican political entities, this idea of the inseparable cognitive link between place and political identification is of particular import to the present discussion (Mann 1993:56; Marcus 1983:206–8; Yaeger 2003; see also Ferguson and Mansbach 1996:87–91, 144; Oates 1986:24). The duality of meaning Hansen identifies can be taken a step further. Ethnohistoric, archaeological, and epigraphic data from Mesoamerica suggest that emic conceptions of polity in fact encompassed three intertwined aspects of political and social integration and interaction:

1. Polity as a place, a center and its associated hinterlands, with which polity members identified
2. Polity as a community of people that included both urban and rural populations (and did not always make such a distinction)
3. Polity as a political authority (a government).

From this perspective, the fundamental physical and social features of Mesoamerican polities were the capital center, usually housing the residence of the ruler, as well as administrative and religious institutions, and the people and communities that owed political affiliation to that ruler (as well as to each other). In Postclassic Central Mexico, these political and social units manifest as the *altepetl* and *calpolli* (depending on size and location; i.e., urban or rural, neighborhood or town) (e.g., Calnek 1976; Hicks 2012; Hirth 2003; Marcus 1983; Smith 2008, 2010:147, 2011:57–58; Smith and Novic 2012:5–7; York et al. 2011:2409). More often than not, these polities were relatively small

in both physical size and population; Tenochtitlan was actually quite atypical of Aztec cities (Smith 2008:1). Moreover, Tenochtitlan was the capital of an extensive and complex network of variably sized polities bound together by alliance and conquest to form a much larger polity. Although the Aztec period altepetl was a largely self-governing entity, *complete external autonomy is not an essential attribute of polity*. The degree of autonomy of an individual polity can wax and wane throughout its history (e.g., Hansen 2000b; Yoffee 1988).² This “nesting” of polities at multiple spatial and social scales (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996) is further elaborated below.

Returning to the Maya area, ethnographic research and the available ethnohistories that reference indigenous political organization tend to focus on people and their affiliation to place, not necessarily territory (although some of the ethnohistoric data is conflicting) (e.g., Jones 1986, 1998; McBryde 1947; Okoshi-Harada 2012:293; Roys 1957; Tokovinine 2013:123; Tozzer 1941; Vogt 1969; see also Campbell 2009; Glatz 2009; Liu and Chen 2003; Smith 2005 for comparative examples). This is not to say that boundaries and control over specific locations and resources were not central concerns, particularly at the local level (e.g., Chase and Chase 1998; Iannone 2006; Okoshi-Harada 2012:289; Roys 1957; Scherer and Golden 2009; see also Golden 2010). Ancient rulers were likely well aware of the territorial limits of their political authority; boundaries may have been unmarked, “but an incursion by a rival people beyond the accepted limits was a challenge” both sides would have recognized (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996:83). The point to stress, however, is merely that the modern conceptions of territory that accompany nation-states were largely absent in Mesoamerica until at least the colonial period (see Okoshi-Harada 2012; Smith 2005; Tokovinine 2013).

Turning to the inscriptions, the variable distribution of Emblem Glyphs and toponyms suggests that the Classic Maya did make some distinction between place and political affiliation in terms of personal identification (much like the Greek polis discussed above; see *ibid.*). This is evidenced by rival dynastic institutions centered at different places and toponymic references to “discrete” areas within the “domain” of specific Emblem Glyphs (Berlin 1958; Stuart and Houston 1994). Nevertheless, however political affiliation was expressed by elites across the lowlands, it seems likely that for many Classic Maya the ideas of city and state were inseparable; capitals did not exist independent of their rural populations, and hinterlands did not function as such without an urban center (or at least a complementary node of sociopolitical interaction).

SCALE, IDENTITY, AND NETWORKS OF POLITY

Considering the previous discussion, polities can be of variable size and complexity, not only cross-culturally but within a given region. Polities can range from chiefdoms to localized city-states and regional states to the multi-regional empires of the Inka, Vijanagara and Rome. Introducing a recent comparative volume on polity landscapes, Steven Falconer and Charles Redman distinguish between complex polities and state-level authority (Falconer and Redman 2009:4). This separation of polity, as a sociopolitical entity, from state-level authority is more forcibly echoed by Yale Ferguson and Richard Mansbach, who instead emphasize that “a polity has a distinct identity; a capacity to mobilize persons and their resources for political purposes, that is value satisfaction; and a degree of institutionalization and hierarchy” (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996:34). Their extremely broad definition, however, includes kinship and other small-scale social groups, as well as localized community and neighborhood organizations.

Despite the fact that we consider *household* and *community*—each with a rich body of theory designating its appropriate use—to be better terms at such small spatial scales, anthropological perspectives on household and community organization and integration are nevertheless fully compatible and align with the overlapping and “nested” conception of polities Ferguson and Mansbach describe (see Cohen 1985; de Montmollin 1988, 1989; Hirth 1993; Manzanilla and Chapdelaine 2009; Parkinson 2002; Smith 2010; Wilk and Ashmore 1988; Wilk and Netting 1984; Yaeger and Canuto 2000). After all, polities are composed of individuals who are generally recognized as members of a particular household(s), and that household (or its individual members) often shares communal interest(s) or commitment(s) with other households (or individuals) with whom it interacts. Household and community interests and commitments (whether based on kinship, residence, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, politics, or occupation) at times may be at odds with the goals of centralized political authority (or with each other, for that matter). As Ferguson and Mansbach (1996:13) stress: “The state is only one of many collective symbols with which people identify and to which they are loyal. Individuals are subject to crosscutting pressures arising from diverse identities and loyalties. Loyalties to self and extensions of self—family, clan, caste, village, tribe, city, nation, homeland, church, political party, class, and so on—undermine the political capacity of officials and compete with loyalty to the Westphalian polity.”³ In this sense, the integrated internal and external organization of polities closely resembles Michael Mann’s (1986:16–17, 1993:56) description of societies as ever-changing, overlapping and intersecting socio-spatial networks of interaction

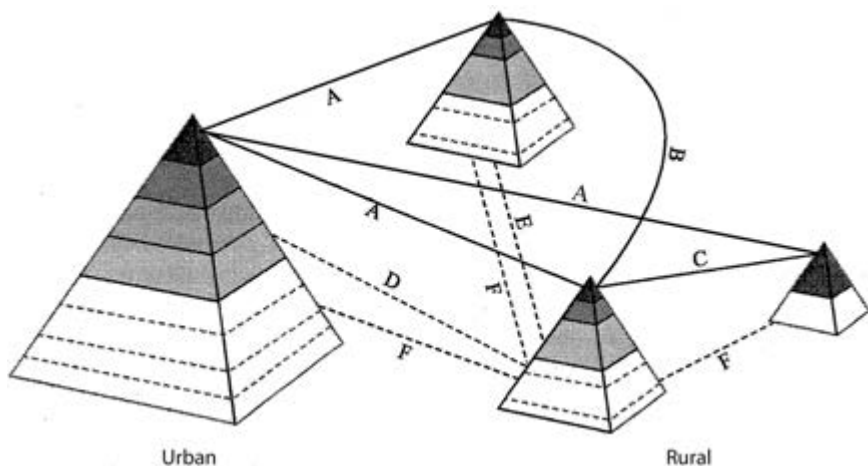


FIGURE 1.1. *Simplified nested model of internal polity networks. (A) Interactions between urban civic institutions and rural community leaders/institutions; (B) interactions between rural community leadership; (C) relations within rural community leadership; (D) interactions between urban communities and non-civic institutions and rural households; (E) inter-community interactions between rural non-civic groups and institutions and rural households; (F) inter- and intra-community individual household interactions. (Modified from Barnes 2007; figure 2.1)*

and power while concurrently placing greater emphasis on the multi-scalar potential of individual and collective identities (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996:32).⁴ Even highly complex polities, such as empires and regional states, were invariably composed of spatially and administratively smaller political units of varying autonomy, as well as less politically defined, but nevertheless socially vital, groups and organizations (figure 1.1; e.g., Barth 2000; Cohen 1985; Doyle 1986; Emberling 1997; Smith 2003b; for the Maya, see discussions by Emery and Foias 2012 and LeCount and Yaeger 2010b). Urban and rural communities, gender and kinship networks, class affiliations, ethnic groups, and occupational and religious orders all potentially played critical roles in individual (as well as inter-) polity organization and development.

It is the socio-spatial organization of the networked relationships between the institutions of government and these “components of polity”—as well as the social webs that spawn and link (or separate) these components—that ultimately create, maintain, and negotiate polity identity and polity action through their cooperation, competition, and integration. Polities may have

been ruled by kings or queens, but they were populated by groups and individuals whose personal traditions, responsibilities, and desires played a fundamental role in shaping their own identity, as well as the decisions of the various socioeconomic networks in which they participated (e.g., Barnes 2007; Yoffee 2005). By viewing Maya polities not as fixed entities but as multiple sets of dynamic and overlapping social, economic, and ideological relationships (Latour 2005), the study of Classic period political organization can avoid many of the pitfalls of static, neo-evolutionary conceptions of the “state” (Campbell 2009:823, 839; Wolf 1990:590). More important, such a network perspective reorients archaeological research to more closely track the varying recursive relationships and power differentials between the groups and institutions that make up polity, along with the multi-scalar study of their articulation and intersection. This is what Edward Schortman and Wendy Ashmore (2012:1) summarize as “the exercise of relational agency by diverse agents operating at multiple, overlapping spatial scales.”

RELATIONS OF POWER

Multi-scalar investigation of preindustrial sociopolitical networks requires a material framework for evaluating interactions between their socio-spatial components, as well as the cultural contexts and meanings of those interactions. The formation of group identities typically includes their juxtaposition against other groups (Insoll 2007). Negotiation or even struggles for power between these groups, with civic and non-governmental institutions, and the power relations that emerge from these interactions are “rooted deep in the social nexus, not reconstituted ‘above’ society as a supplementary structure” (Foucault 1983:222). Congruent with recent trends in anthropological archaeology (e.g., Brumfiel 1992; Dobres and Robb 2000; Dornan 2002; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008; Pauketat 2001; Saitta 1994), many of the contributors examine the materialization of power and its enactment at or across various spatial scales.

Founded in larger debates in the social sciences surrounding the interplay between agency and structure in constructing and reconfiguring society (e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979, 1984; Latour 2005), power is often defined in archaeology as the variable ability of particular individuals or groups to access and subsequently deploy various social, economic, and ideological resources to achieve specific political goals (e.g., Kockelman 2007; Saitta 1994; Wolf 1990). In an influential series of publications, Eric Wolf (1990, 1999, 2001) identifies four “modalities” of power: individual, social, tactical/organizational, and

structural power. Individual power refers to personal attributes that lead to direct interpersonal dominance (Wolf 1990:586). Social power is the “ability to impose one’s will through social interactions” (Ames 2008:488). Wolf’s third “mode,” tactical or organizational power, is derived from an individual’s social or institutional position and operates to direct others within “determinate settings” (Wolf 1990:590), much as a film director controls the actions and performance of his or her actors while lacking final authority over the logistics of “production” (Ames 2008; see also Inomata and Cohen 2006). Organizational power is therefore largely dependent on those groups or individuals within society who control the social configuration of culturally relevant “determinate settings,” in other words, those who have structural power (Wolf 1990:586).

In traditional and processual assessments of pre-Columbian complex societies, structural power is typically considered implicitly, manifest through the construction and maintenance of monumental works as the domains within which political legitimization was enacted and thus societal authority established (Conlee and Ogburn 2005). Structural power, however, is not simply the authority to organize and direct both the physical and social settings (cf. Rappaport 1988; Smith 2003a) that frame the cultural contexts of interaction (whether economic, communal, religious, or political).⁵ It has a second, more dynamic and negotiated facet beyond the oversight of the flows of production (and distribution) of resources (Moore 2005:263). Through control or influence over the organization of particular “social fields” (Lefebvre 1991) or their combination, some groups and individuals potentially gain the ability to (re)define the parameters of social discourse and hierarchy (Wolf 1999:5). This constant (re)appropriation and dissemination of cultural expectation and tradition can be highly dynamic and variably regulated and negotiated through both time and space. While many early theoretical frameworks of preindustrial societal power primarily explored the foundations of stratified power (i.e., the origins of pristine states), the current volume focuses entirely on the organization of power networks at multiple socio-spatial scales within a relatively mature regional cultural tradition (or “city-state culture,” as defined by Hansen [2000a, 2000b]) that included rather developed, preexisting conceptions of rulership and political authority.

Several chapters in this volume focus on this *internal* dynamic of Classic Maya polity. What strategies did rulers employ to incorporate elite and commoner populations into the sociopolitical community in which they served as the political focal point? Were these strategies successful? In what ways did other social groups contest and negotiate their hierarchical relationships with dynasts and among themselves? While some post-roundtable discussions of

these related issues at Dumbarton Oaks did stray into territory-based definitions and the military/political reach of individual polities, the contributions reveal a focused collective interest in tracing the material remnants of the relational networks of cooperation and conflict among groups, individuals, and institutions that together form the building blocks of polity.

As the authors demonstrate, data from several spatial scales are necessary to cumulatively understand and reconstruct the multifarious ways in which Classic Maya polity could be negotiated and materialized. Moreover, a better understanding of the internal components of polity—and their relationships to each other—offers important social context to the study of inter-polity interactions (Fash and Sharer 1991). Such attention to the material correlates of the dynamics of social difference and interaction has a long history in Maya archaeology, and multi-scalar analyses already form a prominent aspect of recent conceptions of Classic period political organization (e.g., Arnauld 2008; Arnauld et al. 2012; Chase 1992; Chase and Chase 1992; Coe 1959; Culbert 1973, 1991; Foias and Emery 2012a; Gifford 1976; Hendon 1991, 2009; Inomata 2001; LeCount and Yaeger 2010a; Lemonnier 2012; Marken and Straight 2007; Sabloff 1986, 1994; Robin, Yaeger, and Ashmore 2010; Schortman 1989; Sharer 1988, 1993; Smith and Novic 2012; Willey and Leventhal 1979; Willey et al. 1965). Though a subtle conceptual shift, network models of polity structure foster the generation of new questions regarding how Classic polities operated, as well as provide flexible, data-driven frameworks for their systematic investigation (e.g., Munson and Macri 2009; Schortman and Ashmore 2012; Schortman and Urban 2012; see also Campbell 2009).

CLASSIC MAYA POLITIES: DOMINANT INTERPRETATIONS

Several large and secondary Maya centers, often characterized by the presence of carved hieroglyphic monuments, have been investigated. However, research on the settlements that encircle these centers—sites comprising the lower rungs of an assumed settlement hierarchy—has generally been less intensive. Studies of peripheral and inter-site settlement, as well as the growing body of information on “commoner” households, demonstrate that highly diverse, dynamic, yet intertwined systems of interaction and integration were in place at multiple scales during the Classic period (e.g., Bullard 1960; Canuto 2002, 2004; Fialko Coxemans 1996; Ford 1986; Hendon 1991, 2010; Houston et al. 2003; Hutson 2010; Iannone and Connell 2003; LeCount and Yaeger 2010b; Lohse and Valdez 2004; Marken 2011; Puleston 1983; Robin 1999, 2003, 2006, 2012; Webster and Gonlin 1988; Willey et al. 1965; Yaeger 2000a, 2000b, 2003).

This is not to say that particular Maya polity capitals did not at times exert various forms of hegemonic control over non-local areas during their histories (e.g., Martin and Grube 2000). However, the full extent and range of the consequences—economic, social, or political—of such interactions have proven difficult to track materially (Hammond 1991; Marken and Straight 2007; Sharer and Traxler 2006). Aside from a few select cases, Mayanists have been unable to define not only the boundaries but indeed the full settlement composition of most Classic polities (e.g., Ashmore 1981; Ashmore, Yaeger, and Robin 2004; Chase and Chase 1987, 1994; Demarest 2006; Fialko Coxemans 1996; Folan 1992; Folan, Kintz, and Fletcher 1983; LeCount and Yaeger 2010a; LeCount et al. 2002; Liendo Stuardo 2003, 2011; Robin 2002; Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003; Willey et al. 1965; Willey et al. 1975). Two of the most intensively investigated Maya sites—Copan, Honduras, and Tikal, Guatemala—stand out as exceptions. Both sites have a well-preserved hieroglyphic corpus and have been the focus of multiple long-term investigations, resulting in a detailed archaeological and historical record of the development of not only both centers but their surrounding hinterlands as well (e.g., Andrews, Wyllis, and Fash 2005; Bell, Canuto, and Sharer 2004; Fash 2001; Harrison 2000; Sabloff 2003).

COPAN, HONDURAS: THE MAYA CASE STUDY

On the southeastern periphery of the Maya world, Copan and its surrounding region is easily the best-studied, in terms of both quantity and quality of investigation, archaeological site in the Maya area. Moreover, the region lacks the dense vegetation characterizing most of the Maya lowlands; high settlement visibility has encouraged extensive regional surveys of Copan's immediate vicinity, as well as adjacent valleys (e.g., Canuto 2002, 2004; Fash and Long 1983; Freter 1988; Willey and Leventhal 1979). Broadly speaking, the Late Classic Copan *polity core* can be defined by a set of stelae arranged around the border of a natural physical boundary (the Copan Valley) (Fash 2001, 2005; Fash and Long 1983; Fash and Stuart 1991). Valley-wide surveys indicate that Late Classic elite groups often occupied, or were adjacent to, the best agricultural lands in the valley (Webster 2005). These groups also tend to have been settled earlier than lower-status groups, suggesting that the initial basis for social differentiation in the valley was tied to differential access to agricultural resources (ibid.). In this reconstruction, this agricultural surplus was eventually converted by certain groups into elevated social status and political authority, most notably by the inhabitants of what would become Copan's ceremonial

center (Fash 2005; Hall and Viel 2004). This process ultimately resulted in a settlement pattern characterized by a highly nucleated urban center and several large elite residential groups dispersed among numerous lower-ranked settlements throughout the valley (Fash 1983; Willey and Leventhal 1979).

Such simple neo-evolutionary models, however, overlook local history and urban-rural relationships (Canuto and Fash 2004; Fash and Fash 2005). Moreover, Copan may not be an ideal example from which to generalize about Classic Maya political and social structure. As a “river center” (Lucero 2006) on the periphery of the Maya world, mechanisms of interaction, control, and the legitimization of authority at Copan likely coalesced differently than in the Maya heartland, where centers of comparable size were more numerous and closely packed. Furthermore, Maya leaders in the region also interacted more intensely with non-Maya populations (Canuto and Fash 2004; Hendon 2009; Inomata and Aoyama 1996; Schortman, Urban, and Ausec 2001). These sorts of interactions likely presented alternate social and political challenges and opportunities for both elite and non-elite groups.

TIKAL, GUATEMALA: THE MAYA “MEGA-SITE”

Compared with many sites in the central lowlands, investigations at Tikal have intensively focused on issues of site boundaries and settlement diversity within Maya polities (e.g., Becker 1999; Culbert et al. 1990; Fry 1969, 2003; Haviland 1963, 1970, 1985, 2003; Orrego Corzo and Larios 1983; Puleston 1973, 1983; Webster et al. 2007; see Murtha, chapter 3, this volume). Nevertheless, the dense lowland vegetation has severely limited survey sampling strategies. An approximately 120-km² polity core has been estimated by a combination of three features (Culbert et al. 1990:115): (1) a drop-off in structure density away from the center; (2) an extensive series of earthworks, whose exact function(s) remains unknown, to the north and south of the epicenter; and (3) impassible *bajo* areas to the east and west (Ford 1986; Fry 1969, 2003; Puleston 1983; Puleston and Callender 1967; Webster et al. 2004; Webster et al. 2007). Transect and block surveys, conducted by multiple independent long-term projects, have mapped approximately 51 km² of this area since the late 1950s (Carr and Hazard 1961; Ford 1986; Puleston 1973, 1983; Webster et al. 2007:50).

The massive amount of survey and excavation data from Tikal and other projects explicitly investigating the spatial limits and structure of Maya polities indicates that Classic centers were highly variable and dynamic locations on the landscape (e.g., Bullard 1960; Chase and Chase 1994; Culbert et al. 1990; Demarest 2006; Folan 1992; Kurjack 1974; Laporte and Mejía 2005; LeCount

and Yaeger 2010b; Marcus 1993, 1998; Nelson 2005; Tourtellot 1988; Webster et al. 2007; Willey and Bullard 1965; Willey et al. 1965). Moreover, analyses of ceramic and architectural data have demonstrated diverse social and economic differences and connections between central elites and peripheral populations (e.g., Ashmore, Yaeger, and Robin 2004; Demarest 2006; Foias 1996; Foias et al. 2012; Fry 1969; Haviland 1981; Robin 1999; Straight 2012; Yaeger 2000a).

CENTRALIZED OR DECENTRALIZED?

However, the data from Tikal and Copan have fueled a prolonged debate over the degree to which Classic Maya political units were centralized or decentralized. Over the years, this debate has manifested itself in several ways, including discussions of Maya urbanism, unitary versus segmentary states, and sociopolitical complexity (e.g., Barnhart 2007; Chase and Chase 1996; Chase, Chase, and Haviland 1989; Demarest 1992; Fox et al. 1996; Haviland 1970; Iannone 2002; Marcus 2004; Sanders and Price 1968; Sanders and Webster 1988; Sharer and Golden 2004; Webster and Sanders 2001).⁶ Unfortunately, these debates have had a polarizing effect within the discipline; perspectives often correlate with the kinds of data researchers gather or choose to prioritize (Canuto and Fash 2004; Foias and Emery 2012b). Interpretations overly reliant on data from elite contexts, even when informed by settlement data from a limited number of centers, mask the very real variability in material culture, demographic trends, and political history across the Maya lowlands. Increased attention to integrating variation in regional settlement and household dynamics with monumental construction and epigraphic cultural history across the lowlands within a multi-scalar and networked polity perspective is a potential remedy to this intra-disciplinary factionalism (Schortman and Ashmore 2012).

The decentralized and centralized models of Maya polities are generally placed in opposition to each other (Fox et al. 1996). In fact, they reflect conceptualizations of the Classic period political landscape at different scales of analysis. Although largely derived from ethnohistoric evidence, the material correlates given for decentralized models usefully describe Classic Maya polities at the pan-regional level, especially when integrated within a peer-polity framework (e.g., Iannone 2002:69; Marken and Straight 2007; Renfrew 1986; Sabloff 1986). Larger Maya capitals do exhibit some functional redundancy, as well as highly fluctuating and unstable long-term political integration *between* one another (Demarest 1992; Hammond 1991). On the other hand, the material expectations of centralized political models highlight extreme ideological,

economic, and political integration *within* Classic Maya polities, where secondary and tertiary sites and hamlets exhibit specialized functional qualities within local polity hierarchies (e.g., Chase and Chase 1996:805; Emery and Foias 2012; Iannone 2002:70; Scarborough and Valdez 2003).

The principal drawback of the decentralized-centralized debate is that the material expectations of each model are not mutually exclusive. Rather than emphasize either-or conceptions of Classic sociopolitical structure, it is better to assume that organization within and between Maya polities was multifaceted and variable in both space and time. The fact that a clear class distinction existed between elites and commoners, evident from several lines of evidence (following centralists), does not preclude the importance of kin- or residency-based relationships in organizing, negotiating, and legitimizing authority structures for both elites and commoners (following decentralists). It should be no surprise that multiple (and potentially independent or competing) horizontal and vertical organizational and integration mechanisms were functioning concurrently (Crumley 1995; Foias and Emery 2012b; Kantner 2008; LeCount and Yaeger 2010b; Pyburn 2008; Schortman 1989; Smith 2011; Stein 2002; Willey and Bullard 1965; Yaeger and Canuto 2000). A focus on modeling the relationships between local populations and central elites at the household, community, urban-rural, and polity levels, as well as their distribution across the natural landscape, would allow for more comprehensive interpretations of the internal constitution of Classic polities. Improved understanding of these sorts of relationships would, in turn, provide critical contexts for reconstructing the meanings and consequences of inter-polity interactions.

THE DYNAMICS OF POLITY IN THE CLASSIC MAYA WORLD

The complexity of lowland sociopolitical networks and landscapes demands massive quantities of systematic data collection and analysis from a range of social, spatial, and temporal contexts for a truly comprehensive synthesis. Such mature data sets are rarely possible (in terms of time and funding) in the current climate of archaeological investigation. The chapters in this volume therefore naturally focus on specific aspects of Classic Maya polity. To best capture the variation seen across the lowlands, contributions emphasize distinct combinations of different analytical units and interaction scales.

The volume begins with several contributions that examine the roles and impacts of household decision-making on larger political structures. In recent decades, household excavations across Mesoamerica have significantly increased in number, spatial expanse, and analytical intensity (Carballo 2011;

Robin 2003; e.g., Halperin and Foias 2010; Healan 2009; Hendon 1991; Hirth 2009; Inomata and Triadan 2010; Manzanilla 2009; Marken and González Cruz 2007; Palka 1997; Plunket 2002; Santley and Hirth 1993). These studies demonstrate that elite and non-elite households were active participants in the negotiation of polity.

In chapter 2, Kovacevich builds upon these earlier studies to further explore how changes at the household level inform the internal relationships of polity. Through examination of jade craft production at Cancuen, Guatemala, she explores alternate power strategies available to elites in reinforcing Late Classic social hierarchies. Although the restriction of the final stages of jade artifact manufacture to elite households reinforced their elevated status, the early-stage participation of non-elite artisans in jade production concurrently conferred upon these households new social identities and status.

Over the course of chapter 3, Murtha argues that we need to disabuse ourselves of the notion that Classic Maya rulers wielded strong, centralized economic control over their subjects. As he outlines, results from the long-term research programs at Caracol, Belize, and Tikal, Guatemala, are often used to create models of strong, centralized Maya polities. Comparing their physical, settlement, and agricultural landscapes, he identifies broad patterns in the ways households and agricultural production may have been integrated into regional political systems. He likewise notes a difference between the settlement patterns of the two sites—the households at Caracol are evenly dispersed, for example, whereas at Tikal they are distributed in more fragmented clusters—and suggests that contrasts like these can be attributed not only to differences in local environments but also to variations in agricultural organization. This perspective focuses on the local features attractive to individuals in explaining household agglomeration and dispersal, suggesting a more complex, fluid, and dynamic regional landscape than implied by binary models of political structure.

The subsequent chapter, by Robin and her colleagues, continues to explore the role of households in Maya polity, in this case at the small “minor center” (Bullard 1960) of Chan in the Belize Valley. A farming community in the hinterlands of the Late Classic center of Xunantunich, Chan’s 2,000-year occupation provides a unique diachronic perspective on intra-polity integration and political negotiation. In their attempt to insert commoners as active participants in polity, the authors examine how an established farming community was potentially affected by its interaction with a polity capital and how a nascent polity capital would have had to tailor its strategies to existing communal relationships. They do so by focusing on the long-term development

of terraced agriculture and the diachronic variation in local and exotic craft production by Chan farming households. Their research shows that hinterland households and communities were neither fully autonomous nor entirely dependent upon capital elites and institutions; commoner contributions to broader regional political dynamics were much more complex than allowed by either centralized or decentralized models.

The recursive nature of urban-rural integration is further discussed by Marken in chapter 5. Building upon and refining earlier spatial models of Maya polity through a detailed settlement study at El Perú-*Waka'*, Guatemala, he outlines a framework linking conceptions of Classic Maya urbanism and polity. Although he is able to identify three distinct etic settlement zones at El Perú-*Waka'*—(1) an urban core, (2) a near periphery, and (3) a far periphery—Marken argues that all three zones were fundamental to the operation and conceptualization of polity. By embracing emic definitions that blur spatial distinctions between city and polity (e.g., Marcus 1983), Marken presents Classic Maya polities as functionally integrated urban-rural communities, a stance supported by evidence of widespread low-level rural craft production and the potential influence of urban elites on rural ritual spaces.

Chapters 6 through 9 shift attention away from arguments involving the integration—or lack thereof—between rural and urban settlements toward dynastic politics and political structures. In chapter 6 Maca builds on his previous arguments (Maca 2006) and those by Plank (2004) to examine Late Classic dynastic attempts to maintain control over outlying communities within the Copan Valley through the construction of monumental elite compounds. In particular, four late Late Classic “U-Groups” built outside the Principle Group replicate the form of Copan’s Great Plaza and reference the quadripartite urban planning of the thirteenth ruler, Waxaklahun Ubah K’awil, better known as 18-Rabbit (Maca 2002). Though rooted in a detailed reconstruction of settlement history, Maca’s narrative focuses on describing the social context of Tomb 68-1, discovered by his team within a U-Group in the El Bosque district of the city. The only monumental tomb recorded outside the Acropolis at Copan, Tomb 68-1 is a remarkable find; Maca has identified three additional burials with similar “string-line” pectorals dating to the 6th century CE, all located within or near the three other U-Groups located outside the Principle Group. He argues that these four 6th-century string-line pectoral burials were important physical markers of urban planning during the reign of 18-Rabbit. Copan’s final dynast, Yax Pasaj, tapped into that heritage in building U-Groups atop or near these earlier burials. Maca’s study highlights that Copan was a multi-ethnic community whose

particular culture history played a significant role in its organizational development. Yax Pasaj's attempt to sustain his polity ultimately failed, but his effort is a reminder that even at the end of the Classic period, Maya rulers still wielded considerable authority.

The chapter by Tokovinine and Estrada-Belli examines the role of Classic Maya courts in larger political processes. Reviewing the chronological and epigraphic history of the palace complex at La Sufricaya, Guatemala, the authors reconstruct changing narratives of community and place at this small center. Their attention to the conjunction of local and regional history with the rearrangement and recreation of space at La Sufricaya highlights the potentially recursive nature of internal and external forces on the formulation of Classic Maya polities at the urban scale.

The final two case studies expand the analytical scale of polity to that of the region. The first of these takes a theoretical approach: Fitzsimmons argues that territorial boundaries are largely dependent upon authority and perceptions of authority, whether they have their basis in law, tradition, or personal charisma. Taking a top-down approach to galactic models of political territoriality (Demarest 1992; Tambiah 1977), Fitzsimmons evaluates their fit with Maya examples in the Hiix Witz polity of the western Petén, Guatemala, south of the Rio San Pedro Martir. While recognizing the strengths of galactic models, Fitzsimmons nevertheless suggests that these types of models attribute a passive role to kingship that conflicts with the need of Classic Maya rulers to actively accrue power and authority through success in ritual, warfare, and other forms of sociopolitical interaction. Examining the archaeological data from Hiix Witz, characterized by a series of small centers with inscriptions, he makes a strong case for conceiving of Classic Maya political units as "charismatic polities," whose authority and territoriality were asserted through the actions of their rulers. Moreover, while the development of additional sources of authority could be highly variable, these sources were ultimately outgrowths of charismatic authority and were reinforced by the exertion of power.

Many analyses of Classic Maya polities that rely on hieroglyphic inscriptions concentrate on local site histories and regional-scale interactions (e.g., Martin and Grube 2000). The second case study takes a different approach: in chapter 9, Jackson systematically tracks the spatial and temporal distribution of sub-royal (e.g., petty elite) titles during the Classic period as a way of understanding the different echelons of internal polity political structure. Although admittedly limited in sociopolitical scope, the inscriptions provide a unique emic perspective on the internal organization of Classic period royal

courts. In her examination of the offices within Maya courts, Jackson is able to identify a common governmental framework across the lowlands. In practice, however, the different offices seem to have held variable importance between sites and regions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Archaeological and epigraphic data indicate that multiple forms of interaction occurred between Classic Maya centers. However, if conceptions of Maya polities remain focused on Tikal, one of the largest and longest-occupied Classic period sites, as well as on Copan on the southeast periphery, more detailed understanding of the relationships between large “primary” centers and potentially subordinate centers within the Maya heartland will remain obscure. Of interest is not only how “secondary” centers interacted with larger centers such as Tikal but how these smaller centers incorporated their own local populations into larger interaction spheres. With a better handle on variations between these Maya centers, interpretations of elite-level interactions recorded in the inscriptions can be better understood in their social, political, and historical contexts. By comparing multiple spatial data sets from the southern lowlands, this volume evaluates the potential variability in internal Maya polity organization across the Classic period social landscape. It also, it is hoped, lays the foundation for more nuanced and historically balanced interpretations and research on the organization of—and variation between—Classic Maya polities.

NOTES

1. As a settlement, *polis* designated a nucleated, or urban, locale, that is, a town or city, but also occasionally referenced a defined territory; as a community, *polis* referred to an institutionalized political society, that is, a state, encompassing the overlapping meanings of a male citizenry, a city assembly, or a more abstract “imagined” community (Hansen 2006:56–57).

2. This “waxing” and “waning” of autonomy should not be confused with Joyce Marcus’s (1993, 1998) Dynamic Model of *regional* cycles of political centralization and fragmentation.

3. The term *Westphalian polity* or state refers to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia within which the term *territorial state* was coined. In the social sciences, the term is often employed as an equivalent to the nation-states that developed in seventeenth-century Europe and their successors.

4. Ferguson and Mansbach (1996:32), however, feel that “Mann overemphasizes the supposed ‘autonomous power of the state’ at the expense of attitudes and especially identities” (see Campbell [2009:824] for a similar critique).

5. These potentially overlapping or crosscutting “domains” of culture (i.e., economy, identity/ethnicity, ideology, religion, politics) can be variably congruent or in conflict at different spatial or social scales.

6. The current discussion centers on the decentralized/centralized dichotomy as it tends to place greater emphasis on the material correlates of political complexity, specifically the features of individual polities. Time and space constraints therefore force several alternative models of Maya political structure to be largely skipped in this introduction. Examples include the galactic polity model (Demarest 1992), the super-state model (Martin and Grube 1995), and the court-centric model (Inomata and Houston 2001). However, excellent reviews of these particular conceptual models are available elsewhere (e.g., Chase and Chase 1998; Prem 1998).

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2

From the Ground Up

Household Craft

Specialization and Classic

Maya Polity Integration

BRIGITTE KOVACEVICH

Gaining an understanding of larger social process and the nature of ancient polities has long been a focus in archaeology. The problem lies especially in how to approach these issues. Certainly, the investigation of elite architecture, regional settlement pattern studies, and epigraphic studies can inform on larger social and economic process from a top-down approach to social relations. Household archaeology and micro-scale approaches also have advantages for the study of large-scale social change, as the household is the smallest and most abundant unit on the landscape and the nexus of the articulation of social groups with economic and ecological process (Wilk and Rathje 1982:618). As mentioned in chapter 1 of this volume, household studies have contributed to the growing realization of the heterogeneity of Maya polities, as many rural communities are integrated differently with the political and economic superstructure. Top-down approaches may miss these nuances and the variation that exists within and between polities, although some advocates argue that they can illuminate the holistic totality of ancient polities (i.e., de Montmollin 1988). Bottom-up approaches can provide a unique perspective on how the political and domestic economies articulate, as well as highlight the ways commoners respond to political and social change (see also Tejeda 2008).

Household archaeology is an often understudied yet productive approach to understanding social processes within ancient Mesoamerica (see Hendon 1996;

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Netting, Wilk, and Arnold 1984; Robin 2003; Santley and Hirth 1993; Sheets 2000; Wilk and Ashmore 1988; Wilk and Rathje 1982). Early household studies in Mesoamerica were initiated by Edward Herbert Thompson (1886, 1892) to test Lewis Henry Morgan's (1877) unilineal cultural evolutionary model. Morgan used the presence of certain material goods and technological advances to classify societies into a three-tiered unilineal scheme. He asserted that the Classic Maya did not have true cities because of the lack of urbanism and residence surrounding the ceremonial centers and therefore did not reach the level of a "civilization" (Morgan 1880, 1881). Thompson documented residences and house mounds, arguing that the Classic Maya truly did have cities. Residential and household studies eventually became popular among archaeologists, especially after the pioneering work of Gordon R. Willey's Belize Valley settlement survey (Willey 1953; Willey et al. 1965; as well as his Viru Valley survey in Peru; Willey 1946). Since those early forays, commoner and household studies have evolved and can answer broader questions of the internal constitution of Maya polities (see also Lohse and Valdez 2004; Robin 2003, 2013; chapter 1, this volume; chapter 4, this volume).

A household can be defined as a place of common residence, economic cooperation, and socialization (Gonzalez 1969). Wilk and Ashmore (1988:6) present a more complex definition of households:

A social unit, specifically the group of people that shares in a maximum definable number of activities, including one or more of the following: production, consumption, pooling of resources, reproduction, co-residence, and shared ownership. The unit may or may not be recognized by the people themselves. It may live in one locale or it may be spatially dispersed. Individuals can be members of more than one household, and it is possible for a household to have inactive members. The household is an analytical unit that can be defined empirically in archaeological samples only after protracted study.

It may be especially foreign to our Western sensibilities to have a household that is spatially dispersed or to be a member of more than one household, given our perspective on households as a physical locale with a group of related people residing there. John Monaghan (1995:356) found in his research in the community of Santiago Nuyoo of Oaxaca that they did not necessarily see the household in terms of physical morphology as we do, and they expressed that members of a household are people who "feed one another" and "clothe one another." This idea of the household loosely defined as a group of people working together mirrors Julia Hendon's (1999, 2000, 2002a, 2002b) practice-based definition of households: "a setting in which many groups of men and

women not only lived but engaged in activities that affirmed the importance of their household identity and contributed to the social reproduction of the group” (Hendon 2002a:78). Hendon sees households as playing an active part in shaping the communal identity of their diverse constituents, as well as shaping the society around them. This perspective is important because it recognizes that households are not passive recipients of cultural change, simply responding to social and political events, but rather that they are active participants, shapers and creators of social and political transformation within the social system.

Recent research has focused on everyday life within Classic period Maya households and how daily activities and repetitive behaviors can be constitutive of social identity (e.g., Hendon 2010; Robin 2013:48). Hendon (2010:56) notes that these daily activities included more than just activities relating to subsistence and lodging and also included crafting or production of items for exchange. These activities were not performed merely in passive response to external stimuli from environmental or political factors but were strategies these groups employed to create a sense of social cohesion, mitigate risk, negotiate social status, and possibly gain prestige within the community. At the same time, these activities took place within the limits of the larger social structure imposed by the polity (see chapter 1, this volume). John Janusek (2004:16) defines social identity as “subjective affiliation with certain people in relation to (or in contrast with) others based on shared memory, place, ancestry, activities, gender, occupation, ritual practices, or cultural expressions.” This definition highlights the possible nested and entangled categories with which individuals could identify themselves. The household is the nexus of intersection of multiple identities, which can be expressed in the material culture of everyday life. At the household level, one can observe kin and lineage identity formation but also expressions of identity with the larger community, or polity.

The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate how identity and power can be nested. While craft producers certainly identified themselves as constituents of the larger polity, their daily activities and social practice within the household gave them a more immediate sense of identity. It is in this realm that negotiation of social status began. The act of crafting or the use of a particular technology provides power and agency, which can tell us about internal economic strategies on the micro-scale but also about systems of power and control within the larger polity.

In the investigation of power and developing social complexity of the Classic Maya, much of the debate has revolved around two very different (at times diametrically opposed) categories of power strategies, such as “adaptationist”

versus “political” modes (i.e., Brumfiel and Earle 1987) or centralized versus decentralized (i.e., Chase and Chase 1996; Fox and Cook 1996; Fox et al. 1996). These views in their extreme versions often characterize elites as either functional managers or exploiters (see also Ames 1995; Gilman 1981). Much recent research has argued that these two forms of governance or political interaction are actually parts of the same whole (e.g., Blanton et al. 1996; Bourdieu 1977; Earle 1991; Giddens 1984; Marcus 1998; Saitta 1999). Moving beyond the characterization of governance as either centralized or decentralized has led to an expanded understanding of power in ancient states. Attention to identity formation in ancient states can highlight the ways power relations were conceptualized and negotiated in the past; a focus on how residents of a polity conceived of themselves can provide a window into these issues.

The concepts of power and systems of control are important to the understanding of how Classic Maya elites were able to extract labor and tribute from commoners; at the same time, an unintended consequence of that labor may have been increased prestige for non-elites associated with craft production. Some definitions imply that only certain members of a society possess power, while others rely on threats, sanctions, force, and sometimes violence. This work presents a definition of power that recognizes the existence of power everywhere and that can be mobilized in the form of symbolic and real resources by all members of a society to a certain extent and does not require a physically coercive force (e.g., Mann 1986). This definition is important to the basis of power for Classic Maya rulers, as they relied heavily on ritual and ideology as a basis for power and persuasion. This reliance on ritual and ideology allowed these rulers to mobilize power resources in the form of allocative and authoritative resources, as discussed by Anthony Giddens (1984:258; see also Kovacevich 2007). For the Classic period Maya, control of allocative material resources could take the form of agriculture (e.g., Beach et al. 2002; Chase and Chase 1998; Dunning and Beach 1994; Dunning, Beach, and Rue 1997; Fedick 1994, 1995; Healy et al. 1983; Kunen 2001; Neff et al. 1995; Turner 1983), hydraulic systems (Harrison and Turner 1978; Matheny 1976, 1987; Matheny et al. 1985; Scarborough 1993, 1998, 2003:115; Turner 1974), water control (Lucero 1999, 2002, 2006), and the movement of subsistence goods and control of redistributive systems (Rathje 1971, 1975; although cf. Clark 2003; Freidel 1979; Marcus 1983) versus more esoteric authoritative forms of resources such as public ritual (e.g., Demarest 1992; Freidel 1982, 1986; Schele and Freidel 1990), warfare (Webster 1993), and trade of exotic goods (Ball 1993; Ball and Taschek 1991). Research from the Maya area and beyond has shown that control of resources can serve both allocative and authoritative functions

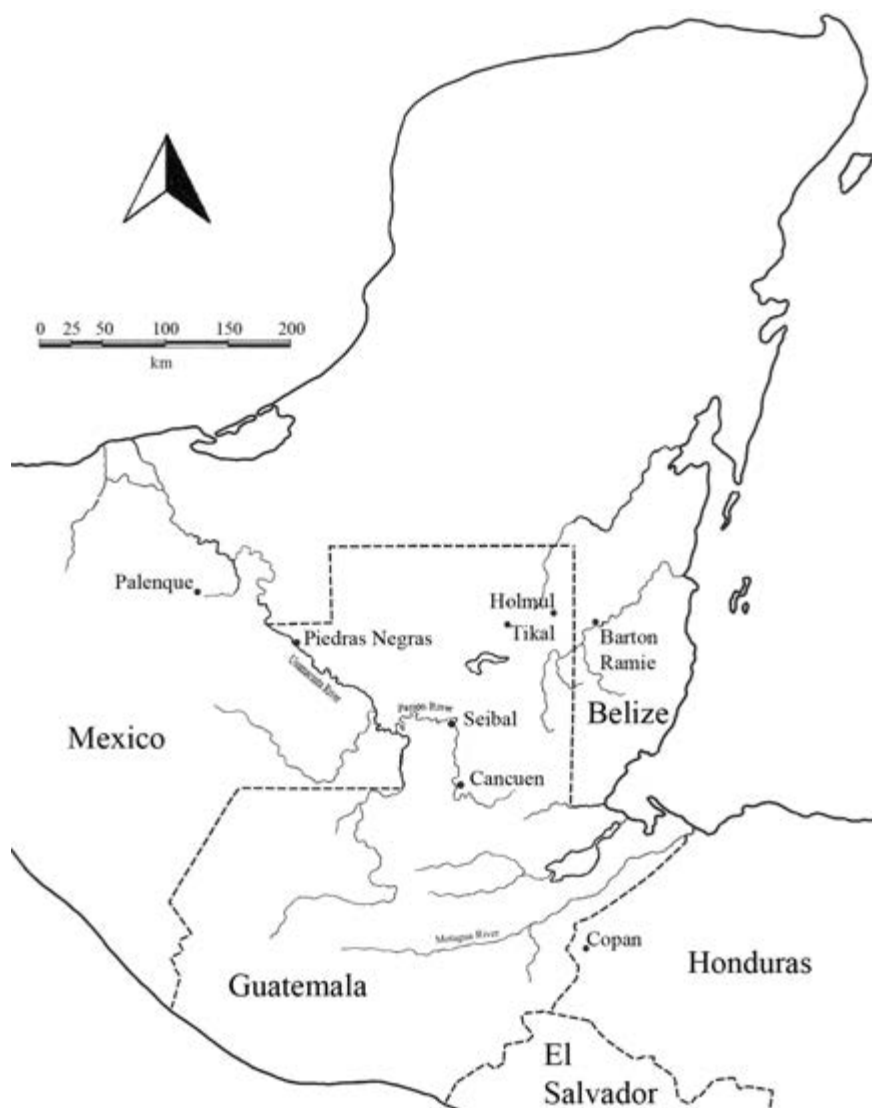


FIGURE 2.1. Map showing the location of Cancun (drawn by author).

simultaneously; for example, research at Angkor, Cambodia, has addressed the controversy of ritual versus agricultural/subsistence functions for hydraulic features at the site to argue that both functions were served (Fletcher et al. 2008; see Scarborough 2003 for a Maya example).

The mobilization of power resources occurred to varying degrees in different Maya polities depending on the resources present. At Cancuen and other Maya centers, the rulers' ideological power allowed them to extract labor from the masses. Specifically, Cancuen's location between the volcanic highlands and tropical lowlands of Guatemala made it an important location for the production of stone goods from the highlands on their way to the lowlands (figure 2.1). The elite used restriction of technology, ritual knowledge, and social prescriptions to legitimate and control production. The ritual nature of Classic Maya society precipitated craft production, as ritual paraphernalia and status-reinforcing goods were integral to the success of the power strategies of the elite. At the same time, the participation of non-elites in this production created a separate social identity for the crafters, conferring at least some prestige and status despite the fact that they were not socially able to own or possess some of the most powerful symbols of the elite, which they may have helped to create.

At many sites like Cancuen, there may have been a combination of manipulation of allocative and authoritative resources or heterarchical *and* hierarchical control of resources and power residing in diverse social groups within Classic Maya societies (e.g., Potter and King 1995; Scarborough 2003; Scarborough, Valdez, and Dunning 2003). The flux through space and time of hierarchical and heterarchical control also probably occurred as the availability of certain resources came and went, as well as being affected by political and social fluctuations of the unstable Classic Maya polities. Heterarchical relationships may have occurred with the proliferation of elites toward the end of the Classic period; non-royal elites or even members of the royal lineage could compete for power through the manipulation of allocative resources. In other words, the leaders of Maya polities may have simultaneously employed centralizing and decentralizing forces to create an operating power structure that required less direct investment than an extremely centralized and coercive system. For this reason, both the centralists and decentralists are correct in their interpretations, especially because of the extreme variation in political and economic strategies between Maya polities (see also chapter 1, this volume). As mentioned, a perspective from household archaeology, or from the ground up, can give us a more complete picture of how sustaining populations were integrated into the power structure of a Maya polity and how the social identities of its constituents were structured and nested.

IDEOLOGY OF CONTROL

Elites at Cancuen increased power by exerting control over the production and distribution of prestige goods in the hands of non-elites. This control not only reinforced existing power structures in Classic Maya society, but it allowed elites to create new and more plentiful economic and social ties with other powerful centers. Elites were able to establish ideological control over commoners, which was grounded in the dominant ideology and “traditions” established in Classic Maya society through a type of sacred covenant (Joyce 2000; Pauketat 2000). This covenant arose from earlier deeply held beliefs and was then incorporated into the dominant ideology, such as the Preclassic period murals of San Bartolo (Saturno 2005) and Preclassic period iconography of Holmul (Estrada-Belli 2006). These ideologies and creation myths provided a separate creation for the Maya rulers and nobility (cf. Drennan 1976), although they were still very much related to deep traditions easily recognizable and already shared by commoners before the development of social hierarchy (Lohse 2007). Maya commoners were indebted to nobles and elites for their service as intermediaries between humans and sacred ancestors and gods. In return for this service, elites could extract increased tribute and labor. An unintended consequence of this change in social structure may have been added economic and social freedom for non-elite producers, who were able to co-opt some of the ritual power associated with production, even if they were not the final owners or distributors of the products they produced.

Thus, both Classic Maya elites and non-elites were agents operating within the social structure, producing it and reproducing it, especially through the vehicles of craft production and exchange. Elites used ideology as “symbolic power,” instead of direct coercive or violent power, to request labor and tribute, which is in many ways “cheaper” and more effective than actual violence or physical coercion (see Bourdieu 1977:191; Giddens 1984:257). This ideology also legitimated their positions of power, as well as their monopoly over certain forms of cultural capital (in addition to sumptuary laws; see Kovacevich 2006). While non-elites still expressed themselves in the context of the dominant scheme (Little 1994; Shackel 2000), the *habitus*, or everyday participation in production of prestige goods for elites, became subsumed as part of their social identity and status in terms of prestige and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977). This can be seen in the caching of raw jade nodules within jade working structures (see discussion below), although the finishing stages of production and ownership of certain jade objects seem to have been restricted by technological and esoteric knowledge, as well as ideological prescriptions.

Many discussions of Maya political organization emphasize the heavy reliance on ritual and ritual performance as a basis of power for Maya rulers (Demarest 1992; Fox and Cook 1996; Inomata 2001; Marcus 1983; Sanders and Webster 1988; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986; Sharer and Golden 2004; Stuart 1996, 1998; Taube 1992, 1998). This emphasis stimulated the development of a ritual economy at Cancuen, in which production of prestige/ritual goods benefited elites but also other social groups. These ritual goods carried symbols of the dominant ideology and legitimated the unequal status and power relations of the elites.

In state-level societies, certain classes of goods were restricted to elites, and their ownership conferred prestige. They still ideologically and ritually reinforced the identity of the community, however, and could be seen as simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal forces within the society. For the Classic Maya, monumental temples, which represented sacred mountains (see Schele and Freidel 1990), offer an effective example of the opposition of these forces. Community labor was conscripted for their construction, and the enactment of rituals as well as burials within them was restricted to the elite, but communal rituals practiced at the temples by elites reinforced the larger community identity and stability (see also McAnany 2010). Items produced in the ritual economy reinforced the power of Maya rulers, therefore creating a basis for political power, but in this case and many others, non-elites also derived power and prestige from ritual production (e.g., Spielmann 1998).

TECHNOLOGY OF POWER AND IDENTITY

To mobilize the *authoritative* and *allocative* resources at Cancuen, elites needed forms of control that restricted access to those resources, including restriction of technology, ritual knowledge, and social prescriptions (such as sumptuary laws; see Kovacevich 2006). These systems of control were mediated by the dominant ideology, setting elites apart as ritual specialists and intermediaries with the gods and ancestors. At the same time, other social groups were able to appropriate some of the symbols and resources of power, negotiating their position within the social hierarchy. Technologies can serve as the means for power and social identity for multiple social groups within societies.

The perspective on technology taken in this research has deep roots in social and archaeological theory, beginning especially with Marcel Mauss (1979 [1935]) but also with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (2002 [1848]), as well as V. Gordon Childe (1936). Childe (1956:1) recognized that technologies are not only material but also social transformations and are “concrete expressions and

embodiments of human thought and ideas" (cited in Dobres and Hoffman 1999:3). Mauss (1979 [1935]) saw technological production as a "total social fact," as it incorporates all aspects of the social and is not merely a sequence of action. Each step in the process of a technique is socially charged (no matter what it is), and each step used in creating that technique is socially informed, in a process he called *enchaînement organique*. Both Mauss (ibid.) and Heidegger (1977) were interested in the sequential unfolding of actions and their social importance because that was the locus for the production of cultural meaning and practical action (see also Dobres 1999:127).

As a student of Mauss, André Leroi-Gourhan (1945) introduced this concept to archaeology in the form of *chaîne opératoire* and by doing so began to move the focus away from artifact typology and morphology to "life histories" of artifacts (see also Dobres 1999, 2000; Schiffer 1992 [although Schiffer included use of the object]). His interest was in the technological process of creation of artifacts and how that process was socially informed.

With these studies, archaeologists began to realize a deeper understanding of how the process of technology actually affects changes in social structure, how power and identities were negotiated and formed through techniques. The *chaîne opératoire* methodology has been widely used to accomplish these goals (Dietler and Herbich 1989, 1998; Dobres 1999, 2000; Dobres and Hoffman 1994, 1999; Jennings et al. 2005). Many of the more recent studies include applications of practice theory, implicitly or explicitly, to more fully comprehend these processes.

Marcia-Anne Dobres expanded on the work of Pierre Lemonnier (1986, 1992, 1993) especially to focus on the inclusion of practice theory. The social aspect of production is focused on aspects of both action and tradition: "Technical acts can thus be treated as a medium for defining, negotiating, and expressing personhood" (Dobres 1999:129). Technical knowledge can be translated into social status and power (Childs 1999; Dobres 1999; Hoffman 1999; Pfaffenberger 1999). There is often no need to control the material techniques and products as much as "techno-scientific knowledge" (Dobres 1999; Schiffer and Skibo 1987).

It is within this theoretical framework that household archaeology was approached at Cancuen. Excavations were aimed at exposing living surfaces from all social levels of society, and production activities were mapped throughout the site to expose the operational chain and the participation of different social segments. The use of different technologies by different social groups was uncovered, and I argue that these differences in technology translate into differential formation of social identities but simultaneous production of cohesive community identity revolving around jade production.

HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY AT CANCUEN

Beginning in 1999, household excavations were initiated to test the hypothesis that the Classic Maya kingdom of Cancuen had a strategic location between the volcanic highlands and tropical lowlands on the Pasión/Usumacinta Rivers that allowed its residents to specialize in the production and trade of volcanic highland goods into the tropical Maya lowlands (see figure 2.1). In 2001, a formal residential sampling program was initiated to obtain a representative sample of households within Cancuen's sustaining area (Kovacevich 2003). Residential excavations at Cancuen were focused on (1) defining the chronology of occupation at the site, (2) identifying patterns of access of imported raw materials through time, and (3) investigating the distribution of artifacts, focusing on domestic and specialized activities for mound groups at varying distances from the palace.

Excavation methodology relied on a stratified random sample of residential structures in grid squares within Cancuen's sustaining area (figure 2.2). Between 20 percent and 25 percent of mounds within each grid square on the Cancuen peninsula were sampled with either a test unit in the rear of the structure to reach the middens often located behind structures or a trench across the structure to expose middens and architectural features. Depending on the number of mounds within the grid square, 5–10 percent of those mounds were strategically chosen in each grid square, based on architectural type and artifact assemblage, for horizontal exposure.

During the initial phase, 2 × 2 m test units were placed behind mounds identified for sampling to expose middens that may contain secondary refuse from specialized production as well as ceramic chronological data. These units were sometimes excavated in arbitrary levels, but if possible, natural and cultural strata were followed to sterile soil to expose all phases of occupation and deposition. Arbitrary levels were used to break up homogeneous-looking midden deposits in the event there was chronological change that was not apparent to the investigator. From these initial units, horizontal excavations following a 2 × 2 m trench exposed front and rear structure foundations as well as possible activity areas. These test excavations helped identify areas with evidence of production from different chronological phases and social strata within the site. The initial trenches often uncovered burials as well. Because we extended units across the mound (usually in the center) to expose construction phases, burials beneath structure floors were often encountered and excavated. The interment type and artifact evidence recovered from these burials were also important for determining the status and chronology of the structure. In some cases, multiple burials were uncovered within a single unit, trench, or

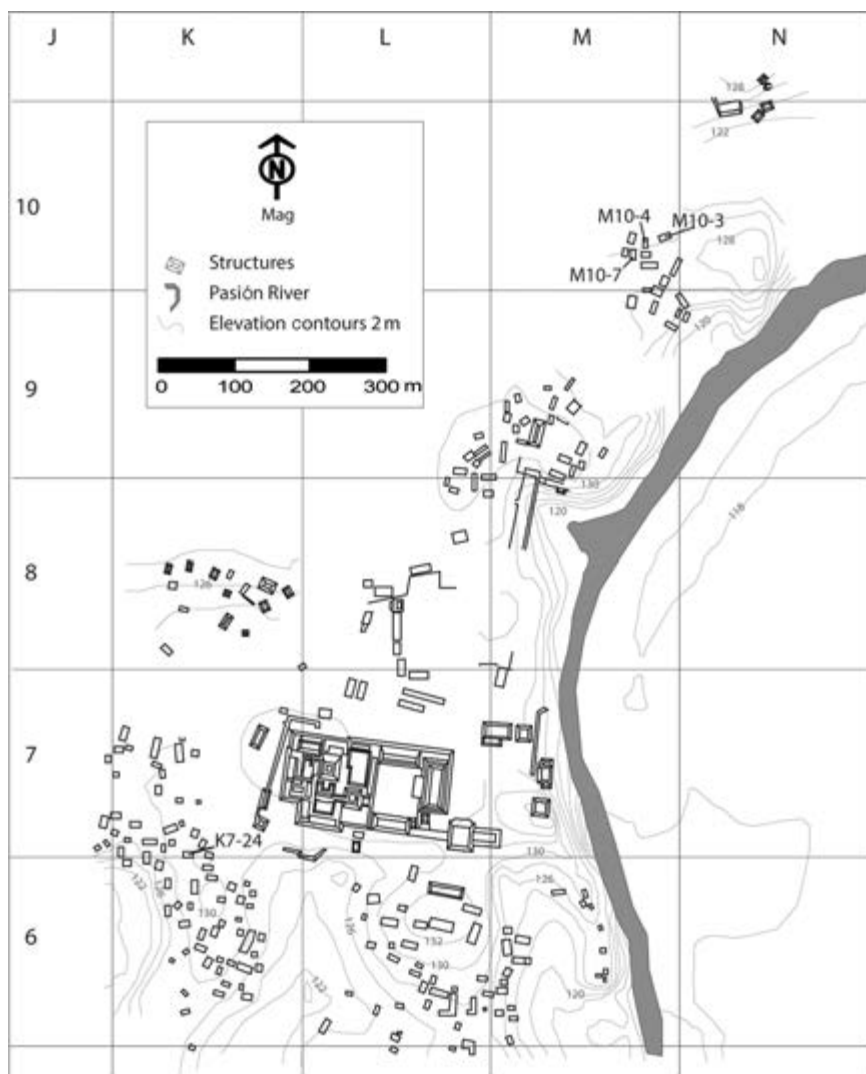


FIGURE 2.2. Map of Cancun showing structures referred to in the text (redrawn by Lia Tzsmeli after Kovacevich, Neff, and Bishop 2005:figure 4.2).

structure, providing an unbalanced sample of burials from certain structures or grid squares.

Following the initial random sampling, residences were strategically chosen that at first appeared to vary chronologically, socially, and economically for

horizontal exposure. These excavations were intended to give a representative sample of economic activities in residential areas of varying social and temporal categories. A grid of 2×2 m units extended from the original trench across the mound to cover as much as possible of the interior and exterior areas of the structure, including interior floors, adjacent patios, middens, and lithic dumps that could represent workshop and domestic refuse. In total, 107 structures of more than 500 on the peninsula were sampled in the sampling program within 20 grid squares in Cancuen's residential area (roughly 20% of the total mounds), of which 35 were horizontally exposed (roughly 7% of the total mounds).

Households at Cancuen are usually in the patio group form, representative of most Classic Maya settlement patterns. Multiple structures often face each other around a central patio, with refuse thrown behind or to the sides. The number of structures within a patio group or household varies widely. Many scholars have found that the number of structures within a household or patio group has to do with the developmental cycle of the family or household itself. In other words, the number of structures increases through time as the family grows and becomes more complex (Cliff 1988; Fortes 1958; Goody 1958, 1972; Haviland 1988; Tourtellot 1988). The number of households at Cancuen experienced a great deal of growth during the later part of the Late Classic (late Tepeu 2, AD 770–800). This may have been a result of natural family growth, but it also may have been affected by immigration, possibly from warring polities downriver (Demarest and Escobedo 1998; Palka 1995).

At Cancuen, the size and elaboration of household groups vary greatly. Many of the structures within households at Cancuen had political and ritual functions, especially among the elite (Barrientos et al. 2002; Barrientos, Larios, and Luin 2003; Jackson 2001, 2002, 2003; Kovacevich, Quintanilla, and Arriaza 2003; Sears 2002), and Lucía Morán Giracca (2003, 2004) also identified a possible communal kitchen used for palace residents. Most relevant to this study are residential structures with exterior stone patio floors that served as activity areas for domestic activities and craft production. The examination of exterior space was very important in this study of households. Many activities and material remains were discovered that would have been overlooked if not for widespread horizontal excavation outside of structure lines. The significance of exterior space in the study of household archaeology cannot be ignored (Becker 2001; Gonlin 1994; Johnston and Gonlin 1998; Robin 2002; Robin and Rothschild 2002; Winter 1976). All types of structures were sampled intensively in interior and exterior spaces in an attempt to expose activity areas. Exterior spaces include exterior patio floors and work areas, domestic

midden deposits, and specialized dumps that may have been located farther from the residential structure because of the dangerous or hazardous nature of the waste, such as lithic production debris (see Aoyama 1996; Clark 1989, 1991 for an ethnographic example).

As entire households could rarely, if ever, be completely excavated, these excavations relied on samples of households, certain structures within the household in general. While this does not provide a complete picture of all activities in the household or the function of each structure within the household, it does provide a sample of household activities throughout the site. These excavations revealed a heterogeneous landscape of craft production at the site, including the apparent segmented production of jade artifacts. House mounds with low investment of labor in construction and exterior patio activity areas seem to have been involved in the early stages of jade production, while masonry structures—often with corbelled vaults, tombs, and hieroglyphic writing—were the possessors and perhaps finishers of elaborate jade artifacts. To understand this distribution, we must explore aspects of power and social control.

Excavation of structures with low mounds and exterior patio floors that acted as activity areas produced a total of 3,259 pieces of greenstone debitage, with a weight of over 170 pounds. Thirty-two of these pieces, most of them with evidence of string sawing, including a 20-pound boulder, were left on the patio floor of structure M10-4 (see figures 2.2 and 2.3). Also recovered embedded in the patio floor of structure M10-4 were large quantities of jade and quartzite microdebitage, which was probably used as an abrasive (quartzite debitage can be seen as white dots in the soil of figure 2.3), which as primary refuse is an important indicator of lithic workshop production (Moholy-Nagy 1990). Tools directly associated with jade working on the floors and middens include slate and greenstone polishing tools (West 1963); chert, greenstone, and quartzite hammerstones; chert and chalcedony drills; and string-saw anchors (Kovacevich 2011).

Although only the early stages of jade production (i.e., percussion, sawing, and drilling) appear to have been carried out in non-elite residences, the jade workers controlled the means of production of those artifacts. They also incorporated symbols of their part in the creation process as caches in construction fill of both Structures M10-7 and M10-3. The caches were located on the centerline of the earthen mound and were uncovered with 2-m-wide trenches placed across the mounds that were intended to expose construction phases of the mounds and uncover associated burials. Raw or string-sawn nodules were placed in the construction fill of the late Tepeu 2 phase construction of



FIGURE 2.3. *Photo showing the patio floor/activity area of Structure M10-4 (photo by author).*

both structures, also corresponding to the fluorescence of Cancuen and the intensification of craft production. The construction fill in these cases was a red clay, which was relatively free of other artifacts compared to some levels in these earthen structures that appeared to be midden fill mixed with clay, although Chablekhal Fine Gray sherds from the level did provide a post-AD 760 date (see Callaghan et al. 2004). In both cases the nodules were located in this red clay fill, approximately 40 cm below the surface of the center of the mound, suggesting that the red layer itself held some significance (Kovacevich and Pereira 2002:278). The jade nodules were placed directly in the clay with no other associated artifacts.

These contexts contrast greatly with jade caches discovered in the royal palace, which include a stone-lined container excavated by Michael Callaghan (2005). This context was interpreted to be the royal throne room of the Late Classic period palace, and the cache was placed beneath the bench. The cache also included a string-sawn jade nodule but also finished products, such as a large earflare (or possibly a head ornament), a small jade head pendant, a jade head-dress ornament in the form of a “jester god,” two large jade beads, *Spondylus* shell, and a pristine obsidian blade (see Kovacevich 2013a). Unfinished jade



FIGURE 2.4. *Cached jade nodule from Structure K7-24 (photo by author).*

nodules and the process of production were clearly significant to both elites and non-elites at the site, but it seems that only the elite were involved in caching of finished products. The residents of the low earthen mounds in the Mro group cached what was available to them and what represented their craft, the raw and early stages of jade production. The working of jade was linked to the identity of the residents of these structures through caching (Hendon 2001), although finished jade artifacts were not.

In another low earthen mound with a flagstone patio located south of the royal palace, Structure K7-24 (see figure 2.2), a string-sawn jade boulder formed part of what Callaghan has interpreted as a termination ritual for the residential low mound (in Barrientos et al. 2000:109-10; see figure 2.4). The boulder was placed on the edge of the patio working floor near three groundstone metates with associated manos placed below them, with three storage jars surrounding the jade nodule (Barrientos et al. 2000:figure 6.6). This structure was associated with jade production, and in a nearby midden several unfinished jade beads were recovered.

There is no clear evidence for who procured the raw jade, although it appears that raw jade was not restricted to or controlled by the elites of the site, as it is found in larger quantities in non-elite residences. The fact that the individuals living in these structures were able to remove large nodules of jade from

circulation attests to their unlimited access to the raw material. These caches demonstrate that the elites of the site were not in complete control of jade resources or at least were not concerned with jade's use in this context, as it did not impact their ability to restrict the most powerful symbols of royalty (i.e., royal headdresses) and elite identity. Royal symbols fashioned of jade were probably restricted through a combination of restricted technologies and sumptuary laws (Kovacevich 2006). So we see two levels of identity constructed through the production of jade objects: that of early-stage jade producers and that of the elite finishers/consumers of elaborate jades. Yet the labor of non-elite jade producers connected them to jades worn and possessed by elites and to segmented production, just as contributions of labor to a monumental structure can create a sense of community identity (Kovacevich 2013b).

It seems that the social identities of these groups were largely characterized by the crafting activities and domestic rituals carried out within them. The resources of crafting may have been mobilized to enhance the status of these residents and provide them with a tool to contest the elite monopoly on certain types of ritual and symbols of status. Elites seem to have mobilized authoritative resources to conscript non-elite labor in the form of construction and craft production. These allocative labor and production resources may have provided the elite of Cancuen with a greater economic basis for power while concurrently allowing these producers some measure of independence to produce items for domestic use or exchange and to negotiate their status in the social hierarchy. Crafting helped define the social identities of many of the jade workers in more humble structures, as seen in the incorporation of raw and worked nodules of jade in caches and of figurines in burials, but it also defined the identities of elite residents, serving to differentiate them from the rest. The different activities (including domestic ritual) represent the dominant and subdominant power strategies mobilized by the various social groups residing at Cancuen.

As discussed, production technologies actively reproduced the social relations that gave rise to them, and in this manner technology can provide an important basis for analysis of social structure (see especially Dobres and Hoffman 1994; Wright 1993). Archaeological evidence at Cancuen suggests segmented production of prestige goods for the political economy in which non-elites or lesser elites were alienated from the final product by elites. Non-elite specialists may have been involved with only the early stages of production of jade artifacts, such as percussion, sawing, and drilling. The more intricate final stages of production, such as incising, may have been carried out by elites (at Cancuen and other Maya sites) who were able to alienate the

producer from the product through a monopoly on esoteric knowledge (i.e., the writing system, the calendar, ideology, and ritual) (Barber 1994; Childs 1998; Costin 1998; Inomata 2001; Reents-Budet 1998). In other words, early-stage jade producers may have had access to what has traditionally been considered an “elite” raw material but were not literate in, and did not have access to, the ideology that could transform that raw material into the most elite items. This is not to say that they could not understand (at least on a basic level) the iconography presented on those items but rather that they were not able to replicate it. The segmented production of jade artifacts emphasizes the importance of the operational chain approach. By looking at the different stages of jade production, it becomes apparent that certain households had access to certain technologies, which were probably socially prescribed and reflective of social identities and relationships within the site.

The control of knowledge can be as powerful a method for social control as the direct control of raw material or labor (Dobres 2000). This type of segmented production of jade artifacts was also identified by Gary Rex Walters (1982) in the Motagua Valley workshop sites located directly adjacent to the Motagua jade source and has been recognized at other sites in Mesoamerica and beyond (Costin and Hagstrum 1995; Cross 1993; Urban and Schortman 1999). Segmented production was also noted by Sahagún in his descriptions of Aztec gold workers:

And the first mentioned are the goldworkers [and] the gold casters. And these goldworkers were each divided, separately classed, as to their workmanship, their artisanship. Some were called smiths. These had no office but to beat gold, to thin it out; to flatten it with a stone. Wherever it was required, it was polished, it was thinned. And some were called finishers. These were named to the real master craftsmen. And hence they were separate; for their tasks were of two kinds, so that they deliberated separately. (de Sahagún 1950–82: book 9, chapter 15)

The goldcaster [is] a possessor of knowledge, of information. [He is] the final processor, the processor of works of skill. (ibid.: book 10, chapter 17)

There may even have been two operational chains, one for non-elites and one for elites. The non-elite operational chain would include the initial shaping of the artifact, percussion, sawing, drilling, until it formed a blank or a template for elite crafters to begin incising and polishing. These technologies defined the crafters as social beings, although they were all involved in the divine act of creation.

Control of distribution of final products, ritual knowledge, and “high culture” (Baines and Yoffee 1998; Inomata 2001) reinforced the power of elites,

but non-elites also controlled some aspects of production technologies, allowing them to negotiate their power within the existing power base and social structure of the polity. During the later part of the Late Classic period, these non-elite individuals took up this production, probably because of increased tribute demands from elites and growing populations as a result of immigration (see Demarest and Escobedo 1998; Palka 1995). The identities and habitus of these artisans changed; they became new individuals with new identities. While the early stages of production could be defined as “grunt work” and the conscious or subconscious desire of elites was to exploit a lower-status workforce, these individuals were still involved in the divine act of creation (see also Reents-Budet 1998). Signs of their elevated status include imported grave goods, such as imported Chablekal Fine Gray wares from the Palenque region; figurines; and some evidence of tooth filing and dental incrustations. At the same time, jade finished products were not a part of these individuals’ possessions (see also Kovacevich 2006). These changes in status, increased jade production, and ritual caching of jade nodules all began to occur at roughly the same time, in the Late Tepeu 2 period (i.e., AD 760, dated by the presence of Chablekal Fine Gray ceramics; see Callaghan et al. 2004). When combined, architectural, mortuary, ceramic, and lithic data all support a division in social identity and possibly in status between those with jade finished products and those without.

While crafting may have allowed a negotiation of status by early-stage jade producers, the production of their identity still resulted in expressions that were well within elite culture and the social structure of the polity itself. The material culture of prestige expressed the dominant values and ideology of the elite, but yet these jade workers were co-opting that power and negotiating their status within the given range of acceptable behavior. They cached jade nodules, but they did not possess royal jade diadems, jade plaques, or large earflares. The segmentation of production and restriction of certain technologies may have served as a form of social control at Cancuen and as a pathway to power. These technologies were not restricted by the types of tools used or restriction of materials but by the knowledge and skill needed to produce them. Elites surely received special training to produce elaborately carved jade plaques, a form of cultural capital not available to all members of society.

DISCUSSION

Power is the ability to mobilize resources. The elite of Cancuen were mobilizing authoritative and allocative resources to legitimate their status and

acquire goods that further promoted their symbolic power. Jade workers in more humble structures were also involved in the mobilization of resources and seem to have been part of an alternative prestige hierarchy (or even hierarchies within the site), in which different notions of value and social identity were created through new “traditions” (Barrett 1994, 2000; Hodder 1991; Pauketat 2000:115; Willey and Phillips 1958) as artisans and crafters, even if participation was in some cases restricted to the early stages of production. If these artisans were physically coerced into labor or tribute, I would expect that their artifact assemblages would appear impoverished (see also McAnany 2010; McAnany et al. 2002). However, this is not the case. While residents of these households did not have access to some of the most restricted forms of symbolic capital (i.e., hieroglyphic writing, carved jade plaques, earflares, monumental architecture, elaborate tombs), they were nevertheless associated with exotic objects, objects of value, and ritual paraphernalia. Increased access to imported goods correlated temporally with increased production of jade.

The prestige associated with these artifacts and the identification of these households with crafting served as a basis for power in the form of social maneuvering and negotiation. As active agents, early-stage jade workers used their participation in crafting activities to establish a new social identity associated with prestigious goods, yet one within the realm of the larger community identity dominated by the elite. As power is defined here as the capability to either reproduce or transform the existing social structure (Giddens 1979:88–94; see also Joyce 2000), the artisans at Cancuen were at once reproducing the existing social hierarchy yet modifying and transforming their social position within it through the creation of a new social identity as artisans. Capital and resources can be accumulated in these areas and exerted even in the face of competition with or resistance from a dominant or elite group, equaling changing power relationships (Münch 1994:1151). Power exists in every social interaction in a society, in material, cultural, ideological, and mental structures. By conscripting labor in craft production from the residents of Cancuen, elites may have produced unintended consequences (e.g., Giddens 1984), providing opportunities for crafters to gain prestige, resources, and therefore social and economic power.

Social identity involves much more than just status. These artisans seem to have been of lower status because of their material culture, but their social identity may have been formed by kinship, ethnicity, and other factors. Domestic ritual served as a basis for power and social resistance in the form of the persistence of small-group traditions and identities within the larger community identity and dominant ideology (e.g., Barber and Joyce 2007; Gonlin and Lohse 2007).

CONCLUSION

Crafting of jade was not an activity that produced actual life-giving or subsistence resources that could be physically manipulated by elites. Jade objects were ideologically imbued with these properties by the elites, especially the relation of jade to fertility, maize, water (vapor), and life's essence (e.g., Taube 2005). Just as "Palace School" ceramics created by and for elites often depicted scenes of creation, likening the owners and crafters to creator gods themselves (Reents-Budet 1998), taking part in the production of jade objects was likewise an act of creation. The distribution of some of these items was likely restricted by social prescriptions, which reinforced and legitimated the power of elites. While in state-level societies certain classes of goods were restricted to elites and their ownership conferred prestige, they still ideologically and ritually reinforced the identity of the community (see also Barber and Joyce 2007) and could be seen as simultaneous centripetal and centrifugal forces within society.

The importance of both these allocative and authoritative resources is that each reinforces the other, and both types of resources are necessary for creating an operating power structure (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). Production and control of production (allocative resources) were ritualized using authoritative resources. This control was facilitated by the dominant ideology of the Classic Maya, relating to the divine heritage of rulers and their singular power to recreate the cosmos (Freidel, Schele, and Parker 1993; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986; see also Drennan 1976 for an Olmec example and Monaghan 1990 for a Mixtec example). Monaghan (1995) also argues that the labor and tribute provided to nobles were seen as a form of sacrifice on the part of commoners (see also Saitta 1999).

The ritual focus of Maya rulers and the ideological basis of power may have allowed control of production without coercion or the threat of violence. The segmented production and elite monopoly of esoteric ritual knowledge and technology served to reinforce the existing power structure and constrain the non-elite producers within the ritual-political economy. Yet at the same time, production of prestige goods may have afforded commoners some degree of social latitude and economic freedom within the domestic economy, as well as accruing prestige and honor through participation in communal, segmented production.

Elites at Cancuen were able to mobilize and conscript ideological and economic resources (authoritative and allocative) to control production of goods which they imbued with value, such as jade. This control also reinforced the economic and political variation of Maya polities, related to their ecological

and environmental positions as well as situational differences, such as political shifts in power and in this case a growing number of elites requiring status-reinforcing goods. Power was at once centralized and decentralized, as can be seen in the creation of social identity revolving around economic activities at the site.

Identities were nested at Cancuen. Non-elite jade workers identified themselves with the early stages of production by caching their materials in their earthen residential structures. They showed off their newfound social status with markers that represented elite culture and prestige, but they negotiated their status within the social hierarchy nonetheless. They were at once members of the community of Cancuen and members of extended family groups of artisans and crafters. In helping to produce status symbols for the elite (which they themselves could not own), they contributed their labor to that community and reinforced the cohesion associated with that identity while simultaneously reinforcing social differences that existed within it.

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This chapter describes and compares the regional settlement and spatial organization of Tikal, Guatemala, and Caracol, Belize, to introduce a household perspective for ancient Maya polity size and organizational composition. These two large and competing lowland sites are separated by 77 km and have entangled epigraphic histories (figure 3.1). Each site also has demonstrative archaeological features that have served as key landscape elements for guiding interpretations about the extent and spatial organization of lowland Maya polities. For Tikal, the defensive earthworks and large natural bajos flanking the site center are commonly used to estimate the site's territorial extents and define an agrarian hinterland or sustaining area with dense urban populations (Fry 2003; Haviland 1969, 1970, 1972, 1997, 2003; Puleston 1973, 1983; Puleston and Callender 1967). At Caracol, regional causeways integrating an intensive terraced landscape are not only central to estimating the spatial extent of the Caracol polity but are key elements used to interpret its structure and organization (A. Chase and D. Chase 1996, 2005; D. Chase and A. Chase 1995, 2004; D. Chase, Chase, and Haviland 1990). The Caracol model emphasizes administration and planning of a highly centralized and urban political unit integrated through causeways and causeway termini within an intensively farmed agrarian landscape (Chase and Chase 2004). The Tikal model emphasizes urbanization, urban boundaries, and external relations. Physical and ecological boundaries

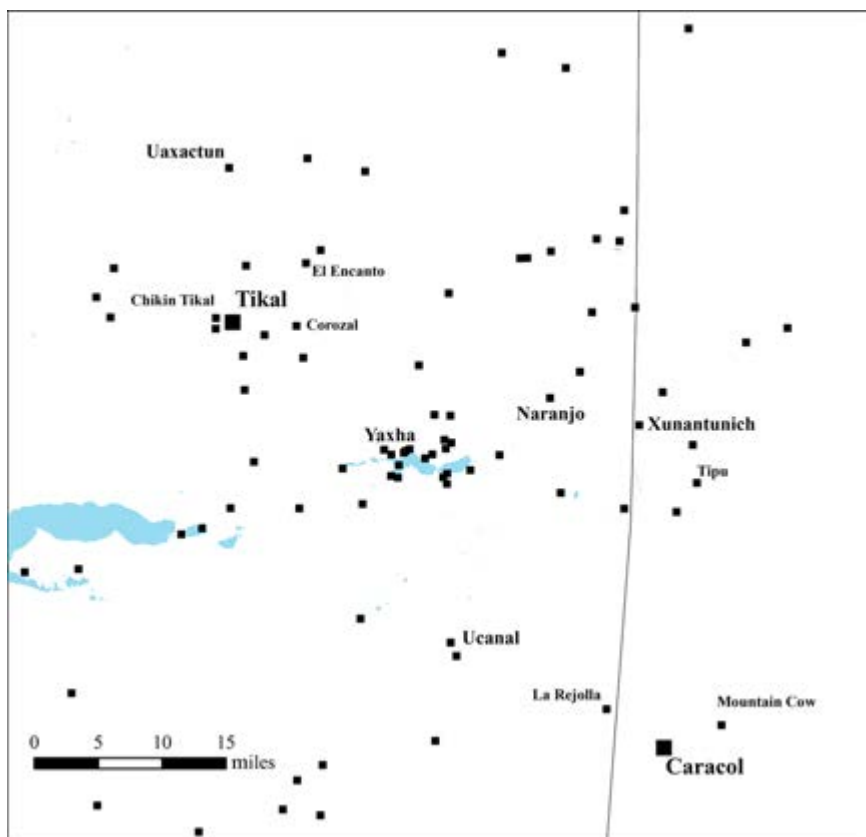


FIGURE 3.1. Map of the Tikal and Caracol regions with sites referenced in the text.

at Tikal are used to define a centralized polity complemented by a sustaining area, while at Caracol causeways, termini, and terraces are used to describe how the sustaining area was integrated to the political epicenter. Both have implications for interpreting settlement patterns and the agrarian landscape.

The models were critically important for some current understandings of Maya polity but are somewhat limited because they rely heavily on supra-regional central-place principles and ideas derived from locational geography (Smith 2003:122). Using these principles, both models more effectively describe inter-site or external political relationships than they can internal or regional relationships. Ultimately, intra-site organization (the local and the regional) is messy, and the supra-regional geopolitical models and interpretations overshadow the messiness. So, the archaeological features used to describe polity

size do offer some indication of the largest extent of a site, but they can become too tightly coupled with supra-regional conflict and warfare events recorded on stelae. Interpreting regional distributions in the context of supra-regional events can be misleading and probably is not representative of the spatial and temporal fluidity of regional organization (Golden and Borgstede 2003; Smith 2003). Alternatively, I think archaeologists should also consider internal organization as a direct object of inquiry when investigating polities, including attempts to understand how households—that is, the basic organizing unit of all preindustrial agrarian systems—were integrated at various scales through time. Analysis of household size and distribution should capture some of the regional fluidity in the prehistoric record. Overall, the Tikal and Caracol models are well reasoned and clearly embrace key political relationships and events in epigraphic history, but I believe they overstate the role of centralized authority and cannot possibly account for the full suite of agents and actors, decisions and negotiations occurring regionally throughout the Classic period.

Here, I aim to present an approach to evaluate polity, territory, and site organization starting from a household perspective, or the bottom up. I discuss how houses and households (big and small), farm and field are integrated into the regional political systems of Tikal and Caracol and how that integration varied both spatially and temporally. I suggest that analysis of local distributional patterns and features is useful for interpreting the changing patterns of Maya polity internal organization. Analogous to Golden and Borgstede's (2003) observations of boundary variability, I not only recognize that there is observable variability within these systems through time but also suggest that the observable variability gives us clues about important local and regional negotiations. These negotiations were especially critical when considering the agrarian landscape. As an important note, I do not challenge or test the centralized and externally focused models described for Tikal and Caracol. Nor do I evaluate how more recent water storage-based models of centralization offered by Scarborough and others influence polity size and organization (Scarborough and Gallopin 1991; Scarborough et al. 2012). I simply present an alternative perspective looking from the household outward. The external political actions of each polity are well documented, and each site was highly centralized at particular times and scales. But I believe there must also have been a constant landscape negotiation played out locally and regionally, which greatly influenced the spatial patterns of archaeological features (especially households) and land use at Tikal and Caracol. By evaluating their form and distribution, absent a centralized test or externally focused model, I believe we can start to sort out some of the spatial and temporal fluidity of Maya polities.

To accomplish this, I describe and compare the regional spatial organization (and specific material evidence of that organization) of each site. In many ways, this is just a different approach for studying the idea of polity in lowland sites and not necessarily a new model of polity organization. My aims are to

1. Reintegrate houses and households farms and fields into polity models of the Maya
2. Offer a smallholder, or bottom-up, perspective on Caracol and Tikal's regional polities
3. Discuss how settlement pattern and landscape data can be combined to provide a more holistic (and, it is hoped, realistic) interpretation of regional polity organization
4. Compare how (and perhaps why) two sites with a shared environmental history and intersecting epigraphic history vary significantly in the distribution and form of archaeological settlement features, along with patterns of regional integration and negotiation.

I conclude that the settlement and political landscapes of Tikal and Caracol evolved, adapted, and were negotiated at various scales for more than 1,000 years. While some of the archaeological features I discuss have been previously used to support highly centralized models of Maya political organization, their broader historical and spatial contexts suggest that far more dynamic systems are in operation. There must have been spatial and temporal fluidity within these systems, best interpreted from the scale of Maya houses and households.

One key element of contention surrounding studies of prehistoric polities, though perhaps less so for the Maya, concerns the role of the environment and environmental history. This chapter's approach is explicitly environmental. I rely on environmental data and some specific ideas about Maya settlement patterns that have their roots in Sanders's (1963, 1981) thoughts on the cultural ecology of the Maya and Webster's (1985) discussion of Maya agricultural production and agrarian labor. Relatedly, I emphasize a smallholder approach to understanding Maya settlements and thereby conclude that any discussion of site or polity organization must include some basic understanding of the physical environment, agrarian resources, and the farming household. This explicitly environmental approach differs from traditional environmental approaches to polity size and delineation, that is, those that rely on catchment-area calculations for delineation of territorial size. Catchment areas, similar to other supra-regional locational models, fail to capture the regional heterogeneity of political systems (Smith 2003; Stone 1991, 1996).

As Smith (2003) points out, many prehistoric studies of polity employ catchment area as a currency to estimate polity size. Such an approach implies a direct association or overlap between agrarian carrying capacity and territorial extent. As Stone (1996) correctly suggests, catchment analysis, first applied to analysis of hunter-gatherer populations, should probably be termed territorial analysis. There are complications when applied to agrarian systems because the term presumes specific relationships between political authority and access to or production of an agrarian landscape. For example, site “x” is estimated to have “y” number of residents in a given time period. So, the political system must have required “z” square kilometers of land and resources to sustain the population. Thus, the analysis is useful to frame discussions about the space between large sites or the administrative and agricultural needs or potential reach of political systems, but agricultural production and political boundaries rarely overlap (Smith 2003:153). This is especially true for traditional agrarian systems, where farm labor and scheduling are organized at the household level.

Similar to the supra-regional models proposed for Tikal and Caracol, catchment analysis predisposes some form of centralized organization or management of agricultural production and cannot adequately account for the dynamic spatio-temporal influences of environmental change in affecting site and political organization. The framework I present here uses spatio-temporal environmental data as an interpretive window to understand households adapted to changing patterns of land availability and productivity. Simply, I examine the relative effects of landscape and localized ecology on settlement structure. I also do not assume universal (spatially or temporally) centralized control of the agrarian landscape. To date, no substantial evidence suggests that Maya kings held any direct control over the agrarian landscape or the products of that landscape. In fact, most of the evidence suggests highly localized control of land and resources (Murtha 2002; see also chapter 4, this volume).

Two key aspects of ancient Maya settlement patterns and agricultural production are relevant to this discussion. The first is a simple evaluation of spatial patterning or the agglomeration and dispersion of household remains. The second is an assessment of the physical and cultural factors influencing those patterns. There is still much debate concerning the size of Maya polities as it relates to population densities and urbanism, but some of the basic features of Maya settlements are reasonably well accepted. Sanders (1981:352–53) described some of these features:

I believe the major determinants [of settlement patterns] lie in the complex interrelationship between agricultural technology, the natural environment and sociopolitical organization . . . Variation in the distribution and density of an agricultural population is the aspect most conditioned by characteristics of the physical environment, particularly those that affect agricultural security and productivity. The most significant are rainfall, temperature, topography, hydrography, and zonal soil patterning . . . Soil and topography were major variables in the Peten and soil should be a significant variable all over the Maya lowlands . . . The cultural factors that affect settlement location may be subsumed under one factor, the location of other settlements . . . The principles involved here are those of attraction (e.g., need of assistance in cooperative tasks, social needs, and so forth) and avoidance (competition over resources, for example). The location of the settlement is the product of the balance between these two opposing forces.

Sanders's statements provide a conceptual map for interpreting Maya household distribution. We should first analyze these patterns from an ecological perspective, that is, recognizing how local environmental factors and agricultural security would influence site organization. Second, he asserts that the cooperation or competition for those features would result in dynamic and changing spatial patterns. These ideas correspond well with cross-cultural studies of settlement ecology, more recently summarized by Stone (1996).

Decades of work by archaeologists attempting to understand causal relationships in settlement pattern studies are reflected in Sanders's statement and are critical to any conceptualization of polity (Crumley 1979; Parsons 1972; Trigger 1968). In an agrarian setting, his ideas also relate to studies of residence and production, or settlement and land use from locational geography. First, Thünen (1966) proposed a simple model of land use as related to settlement location and a method of inquiry, establishing that a few key factors would influence the shape and structure of a settlement. Chisholm (1968) reinforced these ideas and assigned a series of specific weights of attraction to different variables, such as water (10), arable land (5), grazing land (3), fuel (3), and building materials (1); he also evaluated comparative settings of rural settlement and land use. But as Stone (1996) suggests, while the specific ideas of Thünen and Chisholm may not be universally applicable, the general assumptions of their approaches are very useful for archaeologists. Their work is useful for analyzing the agglomeration and dispersal of households in farming settlements because it prioritizes local features of the landscape that are more attractive to individuals. Stone (*ibid.*:114) refers to this as the proximity-access principle. The principle suggests that "the greater one's need

to access any landscape feature, the greater the premium on residing near that feature" (ibid.). Following Sanders (1963, 1981) in the case of the lowland Maya, influential landscape features will vary from site to site but must include at their core access to productive land. Causal analysis of settlement patterns informed by the proximity-access principle is a good starting point for any inquiry concerning polity. However, to understand what specific landscape features are important through time for Maya polities, we must also consider the social and political organization of agricultural production and how agriculture intensified.

Webster (1985), discussing surplus production and labor for the Late Classic Maya, clearly and succinctly summarizes some key ideas about agricultural production in the lowlands. These ideas provide insight into how agricultural production was organized and establish the relative marginal value of surplus production. He wrote (ibid.:383):

1. The Maya lived in classic agrarian societies in which virtually all work was accomplished by the food energy which powered human muscles . . .
2. Prehistoric Maya agrarian systems were probably quite closed in terms of the export of bulk food energy, although not all Mayanists would agree (e.g., Phillips and Rathje 1977). The dependence on foot transport severely limited the distances over which heavy, high bulk staple food products could be moved efficiently.

Many of the centralized models for Classic Maya polities imply specific relationships between political authority and agricultural production, contrasting Webster's ideas with what we know from archaeological and ethno-historic evidence. There is some evidence for agricultural intensification in the Maya area but little evidence that such efforts were centralized. A point of contention might arise here, but my conclusion is that capital improvements in the form of *landesque* features like terraces did not require centralized administration to be designed and built. Moreover, most of the lowland technologies were designed to sustain or maintain productive levels and not increase per capita production for greater surplus. Terraces are an example of clear construction throughout the lowlands to manage and maintain an already transformed (eroded) landscape. So Webster's ideas provide an interpretive framework to understand how sustained agricultural production throughout the Classic period would have been integrated into the larger political system.

Agricultural intensification has a direct influence on the dispersion or agglomeration of farmsteads (Stone 1996). Whether the intensification was as

demonstrative as the construction of terraces at Caracol or as subtle as the use of household waste in gardens immediately surrounding households, it always amounted to increasingly frequent applications of labor on parcels of land in the Maya lowlands. According to Stone (*ibid.*:43), because of the increased labor inputs, intensification exerts a strong pull on farming households: "The premium on residing on or near the plot is proportional to the frequency of plot access." Thus, the more concentrated the inputs, the greater the pressure on households residing closer to the improved landscape. When considering any preindustrial agrarian society engaged in intensified agriculture—with a strong pull from labor requirements—such a system would result in an evenly dispersed settlement system, with farm size directly related to family and household size or the availability of labor (Netting 1993). Given the timing of tasks related to preindustrial agriculture and the importance of shared labor in these intensive systems, a counter-pull factor or an agglomeration factor may have been at play, typically associated with annual scheduling of agricultural tasks (Stone 1996). Basically, when individual households cannot meet the periodic labor demands of intensive agriculture, an agglomeration of households might occur. So, while some intensification patterns can result in a dispersing influence, other techniques can result in agglomeration.

As I have indicated elsewhere (Murtha 2002), this description of Maya settlements is similar to modern ethnographic accounts of smallholders as described by Netting (1993) and Stone (1996). While the smallholder as depicted by Netting cannot be universally applied to the Maya, it provides an analytical framework for studying households and landscape in the context of the regional structure of polity organization. In reality, a polity is at its core a collection of households, at times loosely and at times tightly integrated with a central political system. According to Netting (1993:2), "Smallholders are rural cultivators practicing intensive, permanent, diversified agriculture on relatively small farms in areas of dense population. The family household is the major corporate social unit for mobilizing agricultural labor, managing productive resources, and organizing consumption."

One key feature of smallholding communities is a positive correlation between household size and farm size cross-culturally, despite the fact that the absolute size of farms among different communities varies considerably (*ibid.*). This relationship is quantitatively supported in many parts of the world, including by Hayden and Cannon (1984). Using this model, I view Maya polities as a network of farming houses and households wherein surplus production was marginal and difficult to extract. Regional organization first reflects the complicated issue of farming, especially when quality land

became increasingly scarce during the Late Classic. Second, demonstrative or monumental archaeological features reflect the desire of centralized authority to manage, control, and integrate a regional system, perhaps to support external political activity. Third, the attempt to control and integrate was an ongoing process as the system responded to external influences and environmental change (Webster and Murtha 2015). At Tikal and Caracol, houses, households, soil, and terraces exhibit bottom-up patterns, while the larger integrating features such as causeways and earthworks provide an interpretive window into how the elite and the regional polity navigated and negotiated power and authority.

To be clear, this chapter is not an attempt to deal with all questions of power and authority of Tikal, Caracol, or the Maya in general. Recent research by Scarborough and colleagues (Scarborough et al. 2012) has elucidated a key issue of water and power at Tikal. By closely investigating reservoirs in central Tikal, they seem to have uncovered strategies used by elites there to store and potentially distribute water. There is a great deal to be learned from such a model, especially as it relates to the integration of households in the central district of Tikal. The discussion of settlement here should be seen not as an evaluation of that model or even a competitive model but as a complementary study extending beyond the central district. How households stored and managed water in the lowlands is a separate question and probably varies regionally. The description of household organization presented here simply reinforces some well-documented ideas about the very indirect relationship among elites, households, and their produce regionally. At times, some households may have relied on elites for potable water because of seasonal and annual variability in precipitation, but there is also well-documented evidence that they relied primarily on water storage at or near households through chultunes, ceramic vessels, and household *aguadas*. The two systems coexist and overlap. Focusing now on the settlement, agrarian landscape, and environment of Tikal and Caracol, my aim is to compare and contrast a household perspective for each site.

CARACOL, BELIZE

Caracol is located on the western border of Belize, in the foothills of the Maya Mountains. The center of the site is composed of a little more than 100 structures, centered on the large Classic palace, Ca'ana. The site has a long history of use and occupation, including a recorded dynastic history from at least 484 CE until 859 CE (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987, 1998; D. Chase and

A. Chase 1994). This history also references a series of interactions with Tikal and allied sites during the sixth and seventh centuries. The interpretations of these events and interactions are the topic of some debate, specifically just how Caracol fits into conflicts between Tikal and Calakmul. I do not address the specific role or position of Caracol in these interactions here, as it has no real bearing on the method of analysis. Some key dates, recently discussed by Diane and Arlen Chase (Chase and Chase 2004), clearly demonstrate the Caracol polity engaged in supra-regional political action. The difficulty I find is when these external events are tightly coupled to interpretations about internal polity organization and structure. Key events in the epigraphic history of Caracol are tied to archaeological expectations that may have been more fluid. Regardless, this is a key period in Caracol's political history, and it appears the central rulers are attempting to centralize regionally while they engage in these external actions (table 3.1).

The challenge here is not whether these events occurred or even if some of the expectations in the description are not valid. All of the information in the table could be valid at those specific times and still overshadow the heterogeneous reality of internal polity organization.

Caracol was most densely occupied between 500 and 680 CE. Recent peak estimates for the site are roughly 50,000 and no more than 80,000 persons within a 177-km² region (Murtha 2002).¹ Fifty thousand persons is probably the more likely figure, resulting in a peak density of 282 persons per km². Arguably, the most significant archaeological features recorded at the site, however, are the hectares and hectares of agricultural terraces.

Compared to the overall regional cultural history, the epigraphic events refer only to a short and specific period of the Late Classic (562 CE to 750 CE). I do not challenge the interpretations provided by Chase and Chase (2004), but I do believe that when we refocus discussions of polity by beginning first with households and second with the agrarian landscape, a different, more dynamic, and less monolithic perspective emerges. Even though Caracol may have been politically active externally during these periods, the scale of those events is not well established. More important, the external events do not necessitate site integration or a centralized effort on a matching scale. No doubt it was more fluid, both spatially and temporally. Houses and terraces specifically suggest a long-standing regional pattern that Caracol's centralized institution attempted to control or coalesce as it engaged in external political action after 562 CE.

Household remains or plaza groups are rather evenly dispersed across Caracol's landscape. Regionally, there are a large number of households, but

TABLE 3.1 Key events recorded in the epigraphic history of Caracol and associated description of settlement changes expected.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Description</i>
562 CE	“Star War” event with Tikal	“Over the next 100 years Caracol moved to the political forefront of events in the southern lowlands” (Chase and Chase 20074:60).
626 to 636 CE	Conquest of Naranjo	“served to consolidate Caracol’s hold on the eastern Peten. At the same time the site’s settlement became more tightly integrated into a single urban system” (ibid.).
680 CE	No epigraphic data	“It is suspected that dynastic rule was largely supplanted by bureaucrats after AD 680, if only to run the mammoth metropolis that Caracol had become by that date. The stone hieroglyphic record remained silent during this time of great prosperity” (ibid.).

the repeated emphasis on urban descriptive terminology obscures the reality that Caracol’s settlement, like all of the Maya lowlands, is dispersed. Recently coined as low-density urbanism (Isendahl and Smith 2013), this pattern is not surprising to some of us (Murtha 2002; Sanders 1963; Sanders and Webster 1988; Webster 1985). A smallholder-like settlement pattern is clearly present, with the majority of households having access to between 2 and 4 hectares of agricultural land directly surrounding each household. Much of this land is improved agricultural land. For example, households in Caracol’s Cohune Ridge sector, roughly 5 km north of Ca’ana, exhibit a great deal of improved agricultural land surrounding each household (see table 3.1). In addition, there is strong correlation between household size and surrounding land estimated by drawing thiessen polygons (Murtha 2002:271, table 7.1). While the average area of improved land surrounding each household diminishes with proximity to the epicenter, each household has sufficient surrounding agrarian land regardless of its location on the landscape. Even if every plaza group were occupied during the Late Classic period at Caracol, there was enough land surrounding each household to meet its consumptive needs (ibid.). Contrary to traditional in-field/out-field descriptions of the Maya, there is a direct relationship between household location and improved lands. Reflecting on Sanders’s (1981) discussion and a smallholder model, there is also a positive correlation between larger households and the size of the improved land surrounding those houses.

Terraces are constructed in almost every inhabited locale in the region. Importantly, where terraces are found, households are always interspersed among them. Terracing is a regional adaptation to local soil and topographic positions and is not limited to spaces immediately surrounding Caracol (see Lundell 1937). Three forms of locally constructed and improved terraces have been documented within the region. Terrace distribution is relatively well organized but not necessarily centrally coordinated. Their construction varies regionally, and there is no consistent evidence of centralized planning or construction (Murtha 2002). Placement and construction are highly correlated to local environmental factors, such as soil, topography, and slope (*ibid.*). The lack of field boundaries suggests some locally organized cooperation, but the terraces themselves provide clear plot demarcation (Stone 1996). Finally and perhaps most significant, the terraces exhibit significant time depth. Simply, these are local and regional features constructed over the entire Classic period to ameliorate the negative impacts of sustained agricultural production, primarily soil erosion. Based on calculated labor estimates and agricultural simulations, the labor needs of intensive agricultural production, while oppressive during the Late Classic, could have been adequately met by the available labor of each household (Murtha 2002). In other words, there is an observable balance between modeled productivity and estimated productive labor (*ibid.*).

Environmental data further bind houses to the land immediately surrounding each plaza group. Intensive gardens were cultivated in the immediate area adjacent to each household enriched by household waste. These gardens, probably no larger than 0.5 hectares, may not have contributed substantial caloric intake to households year to year, but they provided an important annual buffer against shortfalls in productivity. A comparison of total phosphorous distribution and distance from plaza groups identified the gardens (figure 3.2). The elevated P values compare well with ethnographically observed intensive gardens (Killion 1992). The decline in elevated levels away from plaza groups also compares well to ethnographically observed, cultivated maize fields. Such a pattern indicates a strong correlation between soil enrichment and household location, thereby closely linking the household inhabitants to the immediate area surrounding their residence (figure 3.2). The P values and fractions suggest that only the landscape surrounding houses was substantially enriched with household waste.

Regional environmental and population history shows evidence of the early and sustained environmental challenges facing residents of the Vaca Plateau. Centuries before the epigraphic exploits of the Caracol polity, the regional agricultural landscape likely experienced severe and sustained

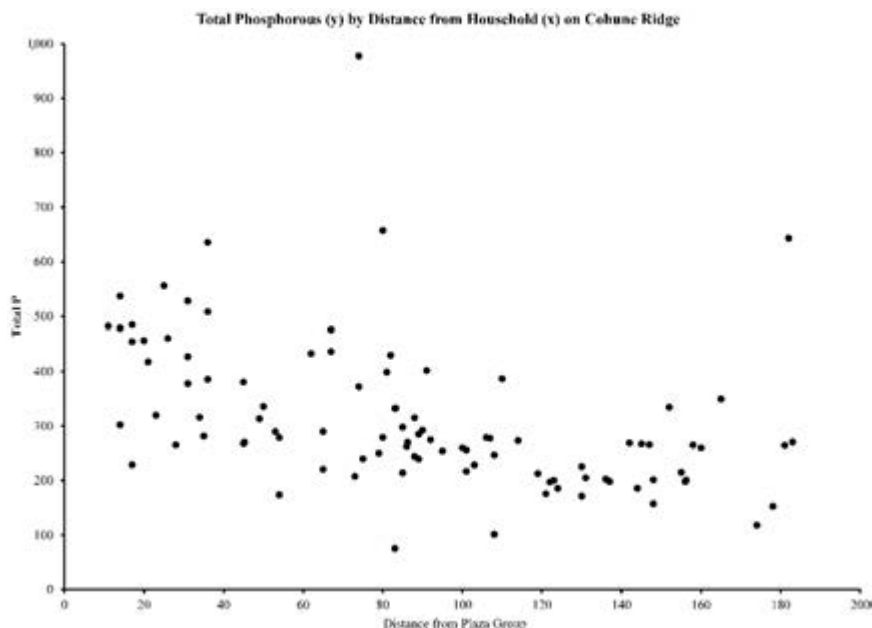


FIGURE 3.2. *Total P values as compared to distance from households in the Cohune Ridge region of Caracol.*

erosion (Murtha 2002). The inhabitants of the Caracol region exhibit strong household-centered strategies to manage this changing landscape throughout the Early Classic period. Essentially, at Caracol, there is a consistent pattern of a dispersed settlement landscape, relying on bottom-up intensification strategies. All evidence suggests that soil erosion, while influencing settlement and landscape patterns, was not experienced as a single event but as a sustained and distributed process throughout the Vaca Plateau during the Classic period. Direct management, oversight, and even coordination by kings and the elite in this complex system must have varied through time. As land-use traditions became more complex, elites must have been involved in resolving conflict; but environmental history, when combined with documented household distribution, clearly indicates a strong smallholder household pattern for Caracol that the ruling elite attempted to tap into beginning in the sixth century.

In addition to households and terraces, several long-distance causeways have been reported throughout the plateau (Chase and Chase 2004). The causeways vary in size, form, and distance, extending as far as 12 km from Ca'ana—perhaps linking some distant settlement to the epicenter, at least for parts of

the Late Classic. From my perspective, there is little material evidence to know definitively that these causeways represented an institutional effort to integrate the settlement. Similar to the earthworks of Tikal, causeways are not the result of a single monolithic construction or even of a design and planning effort. Every transportation system expands and contracts, adapting to the changing conditions of social networks. Some are designed and never constructed. For example, while key causeways mapped connect to Caracol, additional regional causeways do not directly link to Caracol's system or appear to be unfinished. One such example is on the Cohune Ridge (Murtha 2002). Moreover, other regional long-distance causeways are not necessarily tied to Caracol. For example, there is evidence of a causeway at the regional site of Mountain Cow, first identified by Eric Thompson, that has not been surveyed to Caracol and has several other causeways leading away from the site. Some causeways at their termination are connected to large regional sites or what Chase and Chase identify as causeway termini. There is a great deal of variability in their scale and form, so Chase and Chase (2004) suggest that in some cases the Caracol polity tapped into regional sites, while in others they established new sites. It should not be mistaken for a singular central effort because there are several large regional sites, such as Chaquistero, that are not directly tied into the causeway system. Yet Chaquistero has an *abau* altar likely dated to just after the 562 CE Tikal-Caracol event. Clearly, the Caracol elite had designs and plans for integrating the region through causeways and termini. Equally clear is that those designs and plans were never fully implemented, and the system is rather discontinuous and incomplete. Perhaps this reflects a more fluid pattern of fragile regional political relationships than a wholly planned system characterized by a purely centralized model of Maya polity.

Caracol's settlement and polity patterns have been commonly presented as an intensive, centralized effort (after Caracol's warfare event with Tikal) to improve an otherwise limiting landscape, but the timing and distribution of features do not exhibit the necessary patterns to fully corroborate this model either spatially or temporally. This is simply because the externally focused model cannot adequately explain the messiness of internal organization. At Caracol, it appears plausible that the central authority was able to tap into and negotiate the boundaries of a complex regional landscape dominated by household organization. This should not challenge the conclusions of the externally focused model because relying on the same features but viewed from the bottom up, a more variable picture of the size and structure of Caracol's internal polity emerges. This view can account for households and recognizes the factors of attraction and avoidance that influence their distribution over

several hundred years. Early on, households are evenly dispersed to balance the demands of agricultural production. Through time and no doubt through the growth of the polity, the Caracol elite attempt to integrate these households, but they do so through a system of causeways that connect to large sites regionally. Adapting to an established regional landscape pattern, the elite do not wholly transform the landscape similar to other adaptive patterns observed in prehistory (Wernke 2013). The specific features and patterns at Tikal vary considerably from those at Caracol, but a similarly centralized model has been developed for the largest lowland Maya site. As different as the two sites are, there is complementary evidence of a fluid and fragmented regional political system, not nearly as centralized as it has been portrayed.

TIKAL, GUATEMALA

Seventy-seven kilometers west of Caracol, Tikal is located in the Central Petén, north of the modern cities of Flores and Santa Elena, Guatemala (see figure 3.1). The city center is composed of hundreds of structures, including palaces and temples. In contrast to Caracol, settlement beyond the center is fragmented and clustered. While there are no significant long-distance causeways, a fragmented defensive earthwork or at least some form of physical boundary marker has been documented throughout the region (Puleston and Callendar 1967; Webster et al. 2004, 2007, 2008). Prior to recent studies, the earthwork and large bajos flanking the site center were perceived to be definitive boundaries of Tikal's polity and urban settlement. As described by William Haviland (1981:89), "[Tikal] was bounded on the east and west by bajo and on the north and south by artificially constructed earthworks running between the bajos. There is a direct and significant correlation between these two boundaries and settlement density."

Recently, Haviland (2003:134) reiterated the importance of the earthwork, commenting that substantially lower densities of households are found beyond the northern and southern earthworks. Similar to Caracol, the internal organization of the earthwork, when combined with ideas about Tikal's external political actions, became obscured by these inter-site polity ideas. This radically transformed the way sites like Tikal are described. Glassman and Annaya (2011:69–70), for example, write: "The core area of the city, occupied by great temples and other elite constructions, took up six square miles. An additional 19 square miles, 25 miles altogether, were occupied by buildings. Another 22 square miles—47 square miles altogether—were passively defended by walls, moats and natural boundaries. These 22 square miles were farmed intensively.

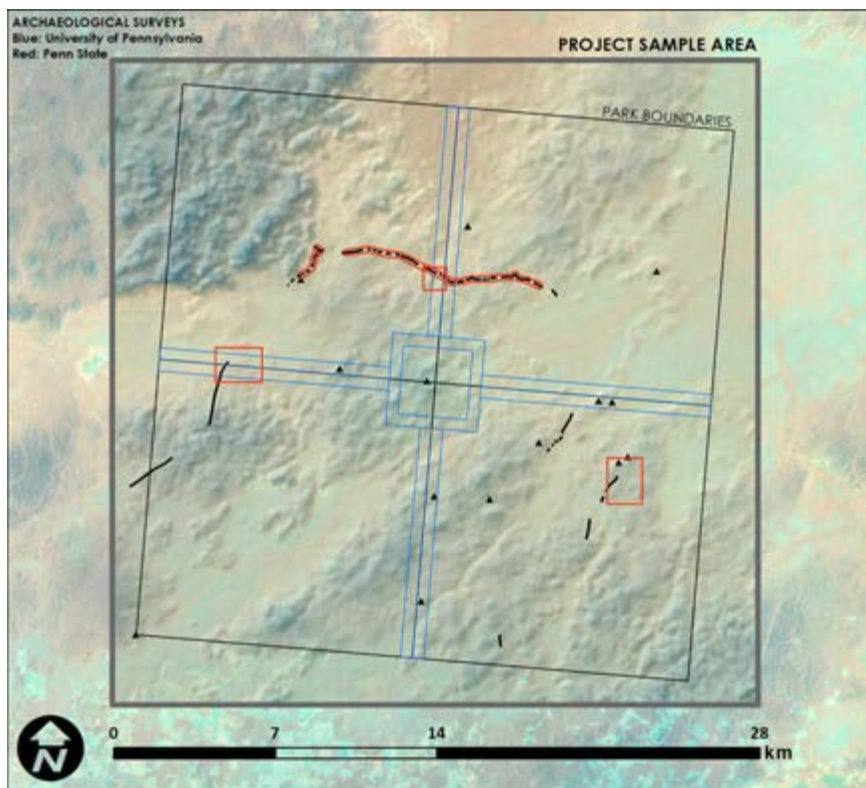


FIGURE 3.3. *Map of the Tikal region illustrating the location of the earthwork, sampled areas, and large regional sites.*

They were the granary that the city made sure was never destroyed by enemies and may indeed have been another of Tikal's many reasons for rising to prominence." Recent research demonstrates that the earthwork is not only much larger than previously estimated but also more complex and regionally discontinuous (Webster et al. 2004, 2007, 2008). In fact, the southern boundary is now believed to be a fragmented eastern boundary. In 2005, we also identified a new western boundary (figure 3.3).

Based on recent studies, Tikal's landscape should be seen regionally as a fragmented and negotiated space where clear boundaries between the beginning and ending of the polity were not static and the line between residential areas and agrarian areas was not clearly defined. New efforts to describe the Maya as "low-density urbanists" represent a much-needed return to some

rational discussions of population and landscape, but the legacy of this period is far-reaching and evident in the previous quote.

Tikal is, on the order of scale, similar in size to Caracol, with peak estimates of roughly 50,000 persons in a 121-km² area surrounding the epicenter (Haviland 2003).² The polity is engaged in a longer experience of external political action and certainly more complex supra-regional political action than Caracol. Several key periods in Tikal's epigraphic history are useful to frame this discussion of polity size and site organization. First, between 378 CE and 508 CE, Tikal clearly begins to engage in supra-regional activity, engaging with sites like Uaxactun. Before Tikal's famous "hiatus" between 508 CE and 562 CE, when regional populations grow, the polity embarks on very aggressive far-reaching political action, ultimately precluding a hiatus in monument dedication. According to Martin (2003:27), the hiatus may very well point to some conflict within the Tikal dynasty. Despite the hiatus, Tikal's population arguably approaches its peak size at this time (Haviland 2003). From 692 CE to 794 CE, there is a reestablishment of recorded supra-regional political action (Martin 2003).

In contrast to Caracol, household remains are distributed in fragmented clusters throughout the Tikal region. There is less space around each household in regional pockets, but that leaves large tracts of uninhabited areas interspersed between settlement clusters. The distribution of upland areas, defined by striking topographic variation, is a key environmental variable, likely influencing the settlement distribution (Ford 1986). Because of this trend toward clustering in upland areas, 45 percent of the households have less than 2 hectares of land surrounding them in the central 16 km² of Tikal. While patches of agricultural land certainly separated households, they are less substantial in absolute size than the plots surrounding households at Caracol. In addition, there is less of a clear pattern in the amount of land surrounding each household and the distance from the center of Tikal. In fact, the Tikal hinterlands exhibit pockets of very dense settlement, as at Ramonal, with comparable densities to those found near the epicenter (see Webster et al. 2004, 2008) (figure 3.4). Where topography is more undulating, as seen north of the center, a pattern of household dispersion reminiscent of Caracol is more visible. While areas between households may have been used for gardens, comparable total P tests for the Tikal region are currently unavailable.

Despite substantial evidence of maize production and erosion, there is no evidence of terracing. Soil data illustrate a clear erosion pattern associated with early and sustained maize production, but the topographies of Caracol and Tikal are vastly different. Higher slopes and large tracts of relatively level terrain dominate the Tikal landscape, while the landscape at Caracol exhibits

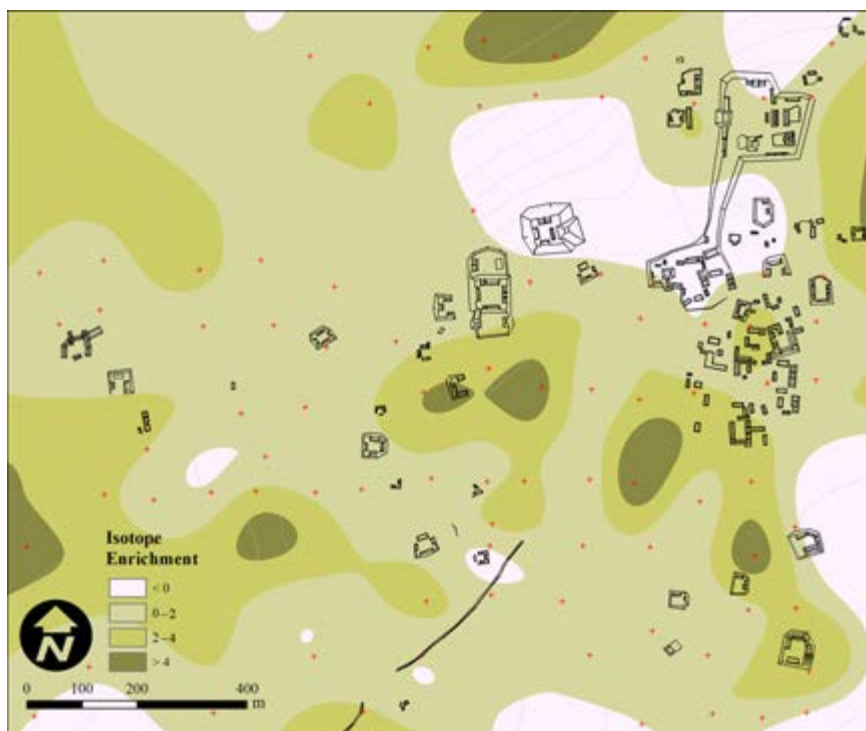


FIGURE 3.4. *Map of the regional site of Ramonal illustrating plazas along with c_3/c_4 enrichment values.*

a more local undulating topography. The absence of landesque intensification features requires explanation. I believe the fragmented-nucleated pattern of households at Tikal not only reflects these key environmental variables but could also suggest a smallholder intensification strategy relying on the combined labor of multiple households at various times in the growing season. To manage Tikal's changing landscape, cooperative labor exchanges meeting the maintenance demands of weeding and harvesting could have been applied to larger contiguous tracts of productive land and the margins of the bajos to meet the needs of household consumption.

While long-distance causeways of the sort found at Caracol have never been recorded in the vicinity of Tikal, there is the defensive earthwork. First identified in 1966, the northern earthwork of Tikal has become for many clear evidence of supra-regional territorial organization associated with inter-site conflict. But recent work reveals that the earthwork(s) is a much more complex

feature in both form and distribution than generally depicted (see figure 3.3). First, the earthwork exhibits significant variance in form from place to place that cannot simply be explained by differences in preservation. It appears that construction was unfinished, and, while perhaps planned centrally, the feature was constructed locally. Second, as currently documented, the earthworks are as fragmented in their distribution as are settlement clusters in the region. For example, with our added surveys, there are no drop-offs in settlement densities outside the earthwork, as presumed in most of the literature concerning Tikal (Webster et al. 2004, 2007, 2008).

One recent survey along the entire length of the northern earthwork identified roughly the same number of plaza groups and structures on both sides of the earthwork (Webster et al. 2004, 2007). Our survey of the eastern earthwork also observed no differences in settlement densities on either side of the earthwork. Densities pick up significantly at the site of Corozal, first surveyed by Puleston (1983), which is at least 2 km beyond the inner eastern earthwork. Our survey to the south exhibited high densities of plaza groups near the sites of Chalpaté and Ramonal, most of which are positioned outside the earthwork (see figure 3.3). The arrangement of larger local sites, plaza groups, and the earthwork (as incomplete as it is) suggests a significant pattern of negotiation and perhaps competition between Tikal and smaller regional centers commonly presumed to be directly under the auspices of Tikal. These large groupings of architecture exhibit the same variability the causeway termini do at Caracol.

Recent soil studies (Burnett et al. 2012) confirm other recent work by Scarborough and colleagues (Scarborough et al. 2012) that the earliest residents of the Tikal region had the most significant impact on their landscape through erosion. This transformation shifted a rather well-distributed natural resource (productive soil) to large contiguous tracts of productive land at the bajo margins, foot slopes, and toe slopes (Balzotti et al. 2013). At Tikal, it seems that the Classic period was spent managing this regional landscape; the earthworks are introduced into the system after particular patterns of regional settlements are well established.

Whether it is the earthworks, densities of households, or natural features like the bajos, the Tikal data have been used to promote a centralized urban model of Maya polity. However, a bottom-up view reveals a more highly dynamic and complex system (or network) of household integration. Beyond the famous earthworks are dense populations and a complex agrarian mosaic. More work needs to be accomplished, but the evidence from Caracol and Tikal indicates that households are predominantly clustered based on their agrarian needs, that is, productive soil and labor. Following Sanders's (1981) ideas, issues of

political centralization may serve to push or pull settlement but do not override those primary agrarian interests. The earthworks themselves illustrate not the heavy hand of a centralized authority but a centralized idea that needs to be negotiated, implemented, and constructed from the bottom up.

CONCLUSION

For decades, the data for Caracol and Tikal have been attached to models of inter-polity competition. Internally, these regional landscapes were far more complex, fluid, and dynamic than dichotomized models of sociopolitical organization can capture. Features of the physical environment (likely topographic position and soil) influenced initial site settlement and evolving polity organization. Land attraction and avoidance further influenced these patterns through the occupational history of each locale. The sum total of these agents and actors, decisions and actions, left behind a messy and complicated record of landscape negotiation. As Caracol and Tikal engaged in external political action during the Early to Middle Classic, it is also clear that both major sites attempted to coalesce or integrate their associated regional settlement. At Caracol, this entailed building causeways to connect existing regional “mini-centers,” as well as establishing new causeway termini in areas lacking such nodes of regional interaction. The Caracol central authority was successful at integrating the polity regionally, but the evidence suggests the system was incomplete and temporally and spatially dynamic. At Tikal, recent earthwork research illustrates the complexity of the feature. It is fragmented and incomplete, and it only demarcates the east, north, and west of the Tikal regional core. In addition, no drop-off in settlement density was observed outside this proposed physical and ideological boundary. Despite its common use in estimating Tikal’s territorial extent, recent earthwork research identifies no clear overlap between that extent (as defined by the earthwork) and the social limits of polity. What this research illustrates is a long-standing regional settlement pattern, dominated by clusters of households adjacent to large stretches of productive land. As Tikal’s political fortunes expand, the central authority attempts to coalesce regional settlements. As is the case with Caracol, the integration appears to be fluid and dynamic.

NOTES

1. There are much higher published estimates for Caracol, some exceeding 100,000 persons (A. Chase and D. Chase 1996, 2001). This chapter is not about population estimates. For a broader discussion of why these estimates are used, see Murtha (2002).

2. Webster and Murtha (2015) recently revisited these estimates, concluding that while the absolute numbers are probably sound, the region inhabited by those 50,000 persons was about four times the size described by Haviland (2003).

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*Political Interaction**A View from the 2,000-
Year History of the Farming
Community of Chan*CYNTHIA ROBIN, ANDREW
WYATT, JAMES MEIERHOFF,
AND CALEB KESTLE

Understanding the nature of political interaction is a central issue in archaeology and across the social sciences. It is not surprising that Maya archaeologists first began exploring questions of politics with a focus on the most imposing Maya centers—such as Tikal and Copan—and their royal elite lineages. These sites with their dominating temple-pyramids, elaborately carved monuments, and substantial hieroglyphic inscriptions were an obvious first place to begin investigating politics. Their archaeological remains and epigraphic texts identify these sites as central places in Classic Maya political systems as vividly to scholars today as they did for the inhabitants of the ancient Maya world. Decades of research at Tikal and Copan have allowed archaeologists to put together a comprehensive view of political life in paramount Maya centers (e.g., Andrews and Fash 2005; Bell, Canuto, and Sharer 2004; Fash 2001; Harrison 2000; Sabloff 2003).

As explorations in the Maya area progressed through time, our understanding of the range of settlements, small sites, and households that made up the Maya world expanded. By the 1960s, Gordon Willey and William Bullard had defined three levels of settlement in the Maya area: major centers from which paramount rulers governed, minor centers with minor leaders, and house mounds (Bullard 1960; Willey, Bullard, and Glass 1955; Willey et al. 1965). Particularly with the advent of household archaeology in the 1980s and 1990s, Mayanists were able to address the range and variation

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in households that existed in Maya settlements of all sizes (e.g., Hendon 2004; Robin 2003, 2012, 2013; Wilk and Ashmore 1988).

But as Mayanists gained access to a wider range of the social and settlement spectrum in the Maya area, their definitions of what constituted the political spectrum remained focused on the politically powerful ruling classes in society and paramount centers. Politics was often seen as the purview of elites, enacted in major centers, and most accessible to archaeologists from top-down perspectives, regional perspectives, or hieroglyphic texts. Such a position is perhaps most clearly articulated by Olivier de Montmollin in a 1988 piece in which he argued that the analysis of political structure could only be achieved in archaeology through the selection and investigation of appropriate socio-spatial scales of analysis because “different processes occur at different social scales” (de Montmollin 1988:65). Questions of political structure could be answered from top-down perspectives that emphasize “large-scale study (polities, polity networks, culture areas)” or middle-scale perspectives that emphasize “medium-scale study (corporate groups, communities, districts)” but were inaccessible from bottom-up perspectives that emphasize “small-scale study (households)” (ibid.:65–71). Not only is political analysis inaccessible from the small scale of the household, the analysis of households is simply unnecessary in a political analysis because the nature of households can be assumed. While de Montmollin’s work certainly represents a polemic within the field, the absence of household studies in most volumes in Maya archaeology concerning political organization suggests that the political roles of ancient households and their impacts on broader Maya political systems remain underexplored.

Across the social sciences, the micro-scale of analysis has long been seen as an essential scale from which to study political organization (Bourdieu 1977; de Certeau 1984; Scott 1990). Politics is not a preexisting entity or one penned by society’s elites, which hovers over the heads of members of a society. Politics is an ongoing process, involving the interaction of *all* members of society on an everyday basis. Politics certainly does occur on the steps of large temples and across large plazas under the orchestration of society’s elites. But politics also happens every day as people—elites and commoners and all those in-between—interact within their homes and communities.

In political analyses, lingering assumptions often link the small scale and households with domestic life and the large scale and public places with political life—a domestic/political dichotomy that household archaeologists and feminist scholars alike have shown to be most salient in, and a development of, Western capitalist systems. Anthropological studies of the 1970s initially

posited the universality of a contemporary Western division between “domestic/house (inside)/private/female/consumption/passive” and the active public world of male politics and production (e.g., Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974). Feminist scholars were among the first to begin documenting how domestic and public/political spheres, as isolated social and spatial locations, were constructs of particular historical scenarios (e.g., Hendon 1996, 1997; Joyce 2001; MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Robin 2002, 2003; Tringham 1991). For the Classic Maya, households were important places of “public” ritual performances and political meetings as well as locations for extra-household production (e.g., Hendon 1997; Inomata and Houston 2001; Inomata et al. 2002; Pyburn 1998; Robin 2002, 2003; Sheets 2000). Dichotomizing social domains such as political life and domestic life and equating them with particular spatial settings can lead to the omission or de-emphasis of important social interactions and social spaces that may be crucial for our political analyses.

Building a more inclusive type of political analysis, Marken and Fitzsimmons (this volume) attempt to foster an analysis that includes insights from all settlement scales and bridges archaeological and epigraphic inquiries. As they note in their chapter, a wealth of recent collective research in the Maya area on “peripheral and inter-site settlement, as well as the growing body of information on ‘commoner’ households, demonstrates that highly diverse, dynamic, yet intertwined systems of interaction and integration were in place at multiple scales during the Classic period.” Given the emergent information from the Maya lowlands at various settlement scales, Marken and Fitzsimmons propose that an important new aspect of political analysis is on “relationships between local populations and central elites at the polity level.” We add that political relations between local populations and community leaders below the polity level also constitute a central aspect of a new political analysis. This kind of multi-scalar and interactional approach, which privileges neither the small scale, the large scale, nor any scale in-between, is one well suited for achieving a fuller understanding of Maya politics.

Recently, a number of scholars have suggested that the traditional models used to frame discussions of Maya politics, the centralized versus decentralized models, are overly dichotomous and thus hinder our understanding of the range and variability in political systems and relations (e.g., Fox et al. 1996; Iannone 2002; LeCount and Yaeger 2010; Marcus 1998). Marken and Fitzsimmons further suggest that centralized versus decentralized models mask the real variability in Maya political history in their over-reliance on data from elite contexts and from a limited number of large centers. In a recent publication, Robin, Yaeger, and Ashmore (2010) made a complementary point

that centralized versus decentralized political models largely omit analyses of the lives and political relations of ancient commoners; thus, they do not engage a political analysis that incorporates the full spectrum of Maya society.

When we examine the testable correlates typically listed for types of political organization (centralized versus decentralized; see Iannone 2002), commoners and their lives are absent from these correlates. Terms such as *settlement hierarchy* and *economic differentiation and redundancy* imply the existence of a wide social spectrum but paint the lower rungs of society as the invisible and unnamed others in political interaction. Adding criteria such as “centralized control over commoner lives and labor (present/absent)” acknowledges the place of commoners in political structures but, given the framework of the centralized and decentralized models, does little to insert an active commoner presence into political models. By analogy, it equates commoners with the other kinds of resources the state can (or cannot) control, such as writing, monumental architecture, coercive force, and similar resources. In decentralized state models, the autonomy and self-sufficiency of commoner settlements is a corollary for the weakly integrated state that does not wield the concentrated power needed to coerce and control its populace. Conversely, the dependence and hierarchical integration of commoner settlements within the larger polity is a corollary for a centralized state that asserts political authority and hegemony over its populace. While commoner settlements are depicted in starkly contrasting ways in these two models, in either case commoners are situated as passive objects of state political strategies: commoner organization is determined by the nature of state control and the inter-penetration of commoner lives by elites (Robin, Yaeger, and Ashmore 2010). What is missing in both political models is the roles of commoner households and local communities and their relations with larger political institutions.

CHAN: THE POLITICS OF PRODUCTION

Addressing issues such as these led to the development of an eight-year (2002–9) research project at the Chan site, a Maya farming community in Belize (Robin 2012, 2013). Chan is located in the upper Belize Valley region of west-central Belize, in an upland area between the Mopan and Macal branches of the Belize River (figure 4.1). Across Chan’s undulating upland terrain, its ancient inhabitants constructed a productive landscape of agricultural terraces surrounding a community center (figure 4.2). This agricultural base supported Chan’s 2,000-year occupation (800 BC–AD 1200), which spans the major periods of political change in Maya society (the Preclassic, Classic, and

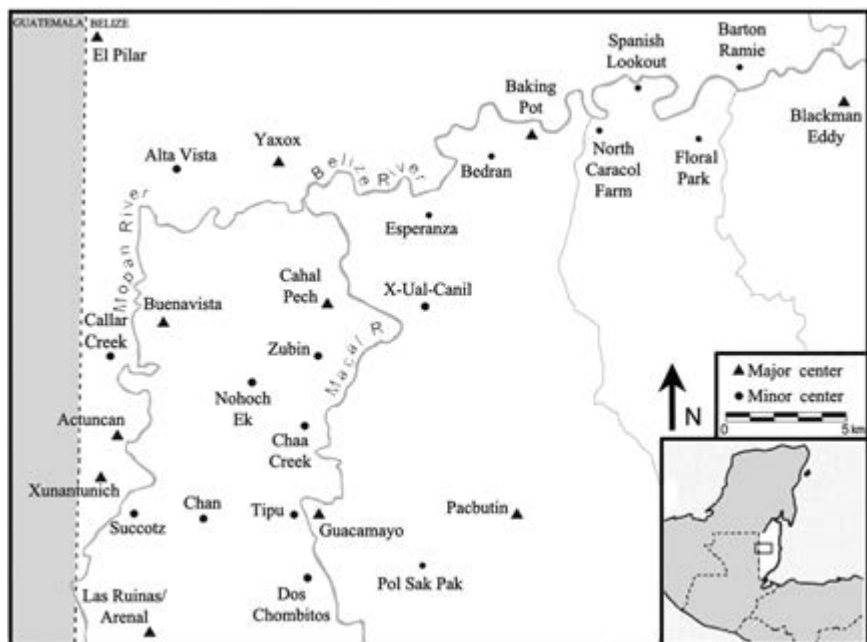


FIGURE 4.1. Location of the Chan site in the Belize River Valley.

Postclassic periods). The scale of the Chan community provides a window into the lives of people who lived in what was a prehistoric Maya agrarian community. Chan's deep chronology provides a means to examine diachronically how farmers' lives were embedded within and significant for the construction of broader regional political dynamics.

The Chan community was first identified by archaeologists working on the Xunantunich Settlement Survey directed by Wendy Ashmore in the 1990s. This regional settlement survey, which examined the settlement surrounding the polity capital of Xunantunich, including that of the Chan community, identified the boundaries of the Chan site using nearest-neighbor and stem-and-leaf analysis (Vandenbosch in Ashmore et al. 1994; Robin et al. 2012:20). The Chan project mapped the 3.2-km² area of the community surrounding the community center and identified 274 households and 1,223 agricultural terraces (figure 4.2). The majority of Chan's residents were farmers. Farmers' agricultural terraces are the most ubiquitous and substantial constructions at Chan. Farmers constructed terraces up and down hillslopes and across channels. Farmers' homes are surrounded by their agricultural terraces, making the

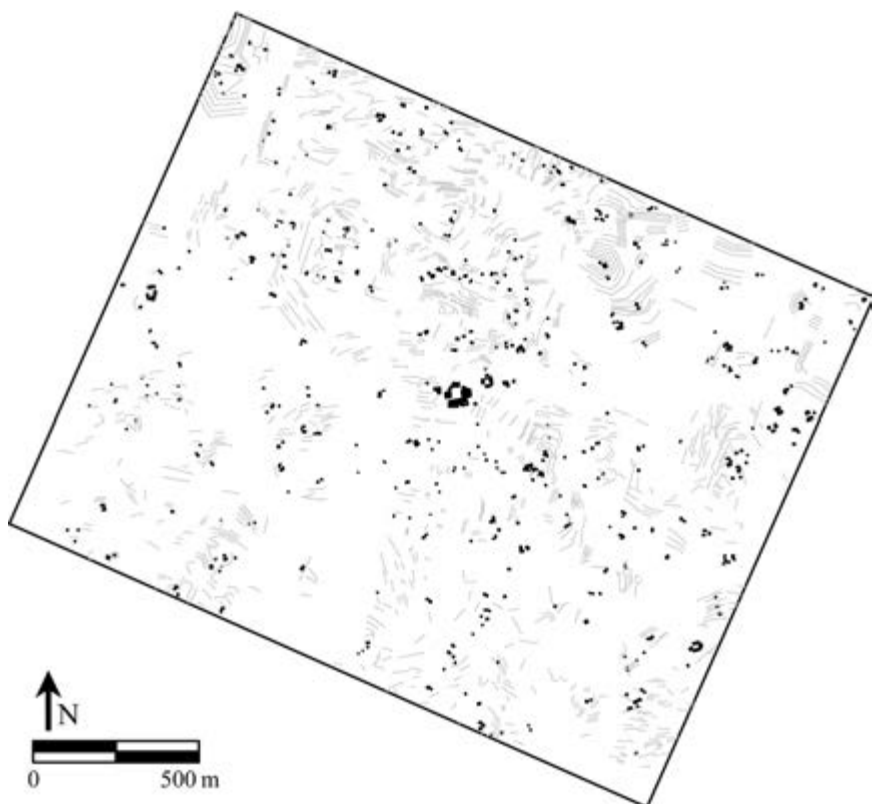


FIGURE 4.2. *Settlement and agricultural terraces at Chan.*

farmstead (a residential and agricultural area) the basic settlement unit at Chan. All of Chan's residents, from its humblest farmer to community leader, lived in perishable buildings with thatch roofs constructed on stone substructures.

In addition to farmers' households, 1 biface production household and 11 limestone quarrying areas were identified during the Chan survey (Hearth 2012; Kestle 2012). Excavations identified that Chan's leading families were involved in low-intensity *Strombus* shell ornament production and obsidian blade production (Hearth 2008; Keller 2012; Meierhoff, Golitko, and Morris 2012). These suggest the types of non-agricultural production that were also ongoing in this farming community.

Chan's community center is located at the spatial and geographical center of the community on a local high point in the topography. It consists of two adjoining plazas (figure 4.3). The central plaza is the largest architectural

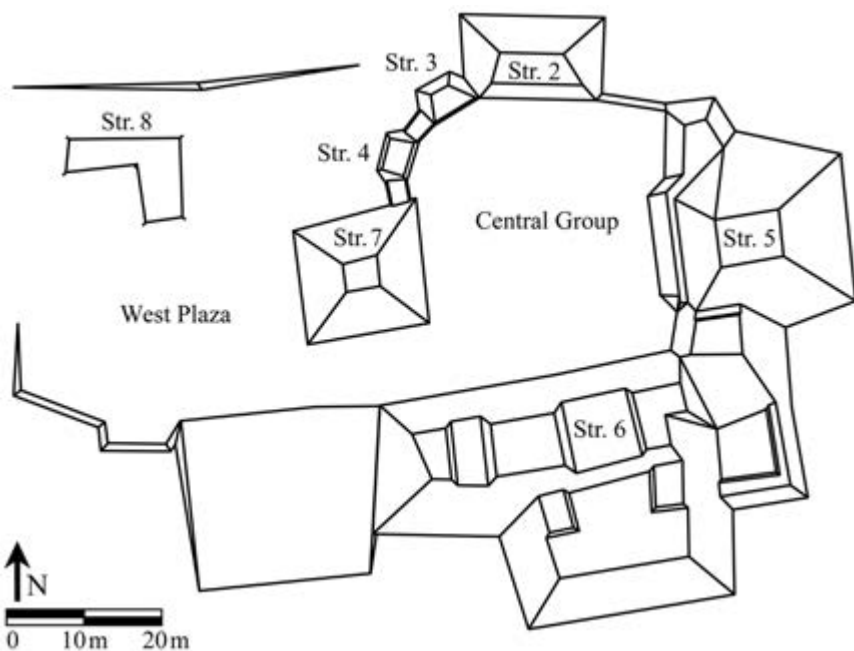


FIGURE 4.3. *Chan's community center.*

complex at Chan and was its main location for community-level political and ceremonial events, administration, and adjudication; it also housed a residence for Chan's leading family. The adjoining West Plaza is a largely open space used for public political and ritual events (Cap 2012). On the east and west sides of the Central Group is an E-Group, a distinctive type of architectural complex common throughout the Maya area that was an important location for ritual and ancestor veneration. The east structure of the E-Group is the tallest structure at Chan, rising to a height of 5.6 m.

One measure Mayanists use to judge site size is the height of the largest pyramidal structure at a site. At Tikal, the tallest temple (Temple IV) is 60 m high. At Xunantunich, the capital of the Late Classic polity that included Chan, the tallest temple (El Castillo) is 43 m in height. Other major centers in the Belize Valley, such as Buenavista and Cahal Pech, have 24-m-high temples (Garber 2004). Chan, with its 5.6-m-high east temple, is not the smallest Maya site in terms of pyramidal structure height. At Bedran, located 1 km southwest of Baking Pot, a major center in the Belize Valley, there is an E-Group with a 2-m-high east structure (Conlon and Powis 2004). But Chan

certainly represents the smaller end of the spectrum of sites in the Maya area. The scale of the Chan site places it in the smaller end of “minor centers,” as defined by Willey and Bullard (Bullard 1960; Willey, Bullard, and Glass 1955; Willey et al. 1965).

The Belize Valley region where Chan is located was a peripheral and provincial part of the Maya world throughout most of its history (Garber 2004; Helmke and Awe 2012; LeCount and Yaeger 2010; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004). During the Preclassic, Early Classic, and early Late Classic periods (800 BC–AD 670), numerous mid-sized centers jockeyed for power across the region. These centers were organized as competitive peers, but none became a paramount center in the region (Ashmore 2010; Ball 1993; Ball and Taschek 1991; Houston, Stuart, and Taube 1992; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004; Reents-Budet 1994; Taschek and Ball 1992). Many of these centers have been the subject of extensive archaeological research or are currently under investigation so their political histories are understood. Among these mid-sized centers are Actuncan (LeCount 2004), Baking Pot (Audet and Awe 2004), Blackman Eddy (Garber et al. 2004), Buenavista (Ball and Taschek 2001; Yaeger, Cap, and Peuramaki-Brown 2009), Cahal Pech (Awe 1992), Guacamayo (Ashmore 2010; Neff et al. 1995), Las Ruinas (Ball and Taschek 1991), and Xunantunich (Leventhal and Ashmore 2004).

As documented by the Xunantunich Archaeological Project, at the end of the Late Classic (AD 670–800/830) the western portion of the upper Belize valley was unified under the short-lived and late-flourishing Xunantunich polity capital (LeCount and Yaeger 2010; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004). Located 4 km southeast of Xunantunich, Chan and Xunantunich are within a few hours’ walk from each other. Chan was part of the late Late Classic Xunantunich polity. Xunantunich likely served as a regionally important ritual venue for at least certain members of the Chan community. The late Late Classic was also the period of maximum populations and agricultural expansion at Chan (Robin et al. 2012; Wyatt 2012). The fact that there would be some political interaction between Chan and the polity capital of Xunantunich is perhaps unquestionable given their proximity and settlement histories. The question that emerges is, what was the nature of their political relationships?

This regional history provides a very interesting case study to explore farming–community center relationships. Through time, Chan interacted with numerous Belize River valley centers in complex and overlapping relations of influence and authority. The late intrusion of the polity capital of Xunantunich into the long-lived history of Chan provides an opportunity to explore how a farming community might be transformed by its interaction

with a polity capital and as well how a rising polity capital might have needed to accommodate to preexisting contexts in farming communities.

This chapter develops the important relationships between production and consumption in farming communities and broader regional political dynamics. We explore two case studies from the Chan community: (1) the accretional development of intensive terrace agriculture by households and household groups at Chan, and (2) chronological variation in the production of local and exotic items. In each of these cases, the production of households and household groups at Chan is linked to broader political dynamics in the Belize Valley and beyond in interesting and surprising ways.

THE POLITICS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The most ubiquitous and substantial constructions at Chan were not its buildings but its agricultural terraces. The Chan settlement survey mapped 1,223 terraces grouped into 398 terrace sets (see figure 4.2). Two types of terraces, contour terraces and cross-channel terraces, were identified at Chan. The first and most common type, the contour terrace, runs perpendicular to the direction of a slope, turning a hillside into a wide staircase. Cross-channel terraces consist of walls built across a seasonal drainage channel, allowing silt to accumulate and create a level planting surface as well as providing consistent moisture. Terraces often extend through several household groups, suggesting that the management of these features involved multiple households and may have been organized cooperatively.

Andrew Wyatt investigated four areas of terraces and associated households at Chan chosen to represent variation in agriculture and settlement across the community in terms of location in relation to the community center, the types of terraces present, the proximity of structures to the terraces, and the condition of the terrace walls (figure 4.4: operations 4, 15, 18, and 20; Wyatt 2008, 2012). More than simple terrace walls, farmers at Chan increased and maintained high levels of agricultural production through the development of complex irrigation and water storage systems. The engineering of these systems required detailed local knowledge of the natural environment acquired through long-term residency, knowledge particularly important for farmers given Chan's ecological diversity. Five types of water management features identified at Chan exemplify this relationship: the construction of a spring house, the manipulation of underground streams, the construction of small French drain-like irrigation ditches, the use of *aguadas*, and *aguaditas* (the latter are small, less than 2 m in diameter, water basins, named by Wyatt).

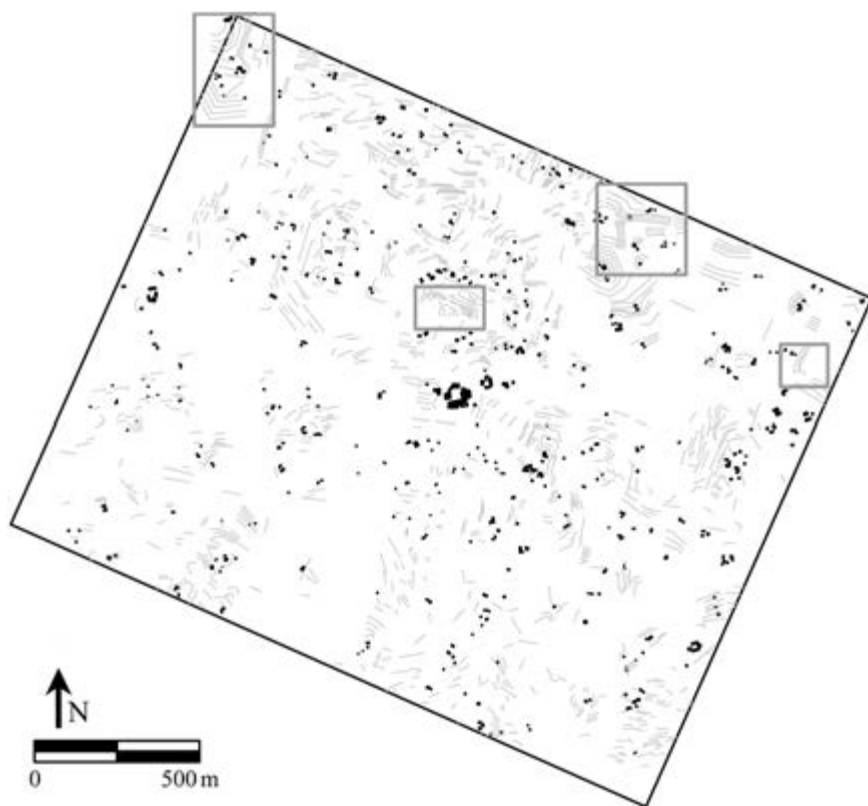


FIGURE 4.4. *Agricultural terrace excavations. From left to right, the squares mark the locations of excavation operations 15, 20, 4, and 18.*

One of the most significant pieces of Wyatt's research on Chan's agricultural terraces is his finding, through the direct dating of fill contexts in terraces and of house structures constructed above terraces, that terrace agriculture began at Chan long before its population maximum and the florescence of late Late Classic Xunantunich (Wyatt 2012). Agricultural terraces, like the better-studied house mounds of the archaeological record, are built up through time.

The earliest small and informal terraces at Chan, like its earliest houses, date to the Middle Preclassic period and are identified in the operation 4 area. Although there were few pressures on land in the Middle Preclassic, farmers may have begun constructing terraces using trees or mounded earth to create small, ephemeral terraces that are undetectable today (e.g., Magcale-Macandog and Ocampo 2005), as well as beginning to construct the stone-walled terraces

now located throughout Chan. We often construe terraces as permanent stone structures; however, farmers frequently create temporary structures before graduating to permanent ones (Donkin 1979; Hurni 1988; Liao et al. 1989). Terrace agriculture continues and expands at Chan into the late Late Classic period when the community saw its population maximum, and terraces are identified in all areas of investigation. During the Terminal Classic period, Chan's population contracts; concomitantly, the only evidence for terrace use is found in the operation 4 area.

As Wyatt (2012) has discussed, this evidence contradicts the anthropological models traditionally used to inform an understanding of the development of intensive agriculture and its relationship to the political economy. The work of economist Ester Boserup (1965) furthers the idea that farmers will undertake labor-intensive agricultural techniques only under the duress of expanding populations. The work of historian Karl Wittfogel (1957) concludes that centralized bureaucratic control and the technological knowledge of elites are required for the construction of large-scale irrigation works for intensive agricultural systems. Applying these models to the Maya area has led to interpreting terrace agriculture as a response to Late Classic population maximums and the increasing tribute demands of Maya polities.

Instead, the evidence from Chan indicates that terrace agriculture predates the rise of the polity capital of Xunantunich and peaks in population in the area. The construction of Chan's terraces and the cultivation of its terrace beds demonstrate household and collaborative household-level control rather than centralized management by distant elites. Terrace agriculture at Chan was a local development by farmers to manage production in hilly terrain. Employing local knowledge to enhance soil management or to increase yields constituted some of the motivations that may have led smallholding farmers to intensify their land through terrace agriculture. Thus, rather than seeing the hand of the Maya polity and its elites intruding on the lives of Chan's farmers and leading to the development of terrace agriculture, Chan's farmers seem much more like Robert Netting's (1993) smallholders who are technological innovators in the agricultural realm—developers of systems of sustenance that later enable the rise of complex political systems. Chan's farmers' deep historical ties to land and agriculture provide them with access to resources and production, which we argue in our conclusion allowed them to develop some form of political constraint on the late-rising polity capital of Xunantunich. The findings from Chan complement a growing body of literature on Maya agriculture that is proposing new and more active relationships between farmers and society, as is also demonstrated by Murtha's work

(chapter 3, this volume) on agricultural production at Caracol and Tikal. Our findings draw upon K. Anne Pyburn's (1998) broader call to re-envision low-land Maya farmers not as passive peasants but as active smallholding farmers following Netting's definition.

THE POLITICS OF CRAFT PRODUCTION

Although the majority of Chan's residents were farmers, a number of households across the community specialized in the production of utilitarian and non-utilitarian items, such as marine shell ornaments, obsidian blades, chert bifaces, and cut limestone blocks (figure 4.5). The scale of production represented by these households matches what Payson Sheets (2000:217) refers to as village-level specialization—"Each household produced some commodity in excess of what they needed for their internal consumption, by means of part-time specialization, and they used this for exchange with other households within the village or nearby."

LOW-INTENSITY PRODUCTION OF MARINE SHELL ORNAMENTS AND OBSIDIAN BLADES BY CHAN'S LEADING FAMILIES

Chan's leading families were involved in low-intensity obsidian blade and *Strombus* shell ornament production (Hearth 2008; Keller 2012; Meierhoff, Golitko, and Morris 2012). During the Middle to Terminal Preclassic periods (Kosakowsky 2012), shell workers produced relatively simple ornaments such as perforated shell fragments and disk beads for distribution within the community (Keller 2012). By the Late Classic period local shell working diminished, and Chan's leaders were distributing fine worked shell items produced elsewhere, including countersunk disks, rosettes, unperforated saucers, and an unusual toggle-bead type all made of conch. Like the simpler homemade items of the Preclassic period, the limited range of finer Late Classic ornamental forms was distributed across status lines to higher- and lower-status households at Chan (*ibid.*).

Comparably, evidence for obsidian blade production at Chan dates to the Late Preclassic and Early Classic periods (Kosakowsky 2012). Meierhoff, Golitko, and Morris (2012) sourced a 100 percent sample of the obsidian from Chan using a portable X-ray fluorescence (XRF) device to determine geological sources for the entire obsidian assemblage. Across Chan's history, residents of lower and higher status had comparable access to obsidian blades from the three primary Guatemalan sources: Ixtepeque, San Martín Jilotepeque, and El Chayal.

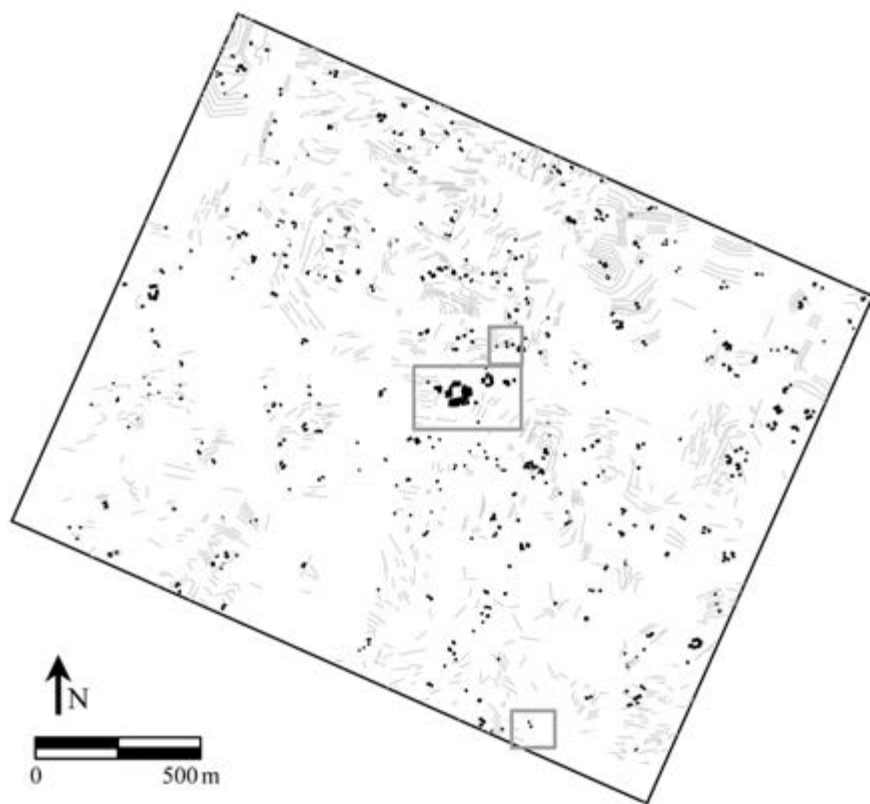


FIGURE 4.5. *Craft specialization households at Chan. From top to bottom, squares identify the location of limestone-quarrying households (upper square), marine shell ornament and obsidian blade-producing households (Chan's leading families residing at its central group), and chert biface-producing households (lower square).*

Four pieces of non-Guatemalan obsidian (from Pachuca, Zinapécuaro, and La Esperanza) were found associated with the leading family residences at Chan and date to the late Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods (Kosakowsky 2012). Because they do not occur in Chan's leading families' assemblages prior to the late Late Classic period and are from the most distant location of any items found at Chan, the first interpretation one might suggest for the presence of these items, as Meierhoff, Golitko, and Morris (2012) propose, is that they might be political gifts from the more regionally connected rulers at Xunantunich. But Meierhoff and colleagues also propose

other explanations: Chan's leaders played a historical role in obsidian production and exchange at Chan and may have built on these historical ties to expand their regional networks in the late Late Classic period.

An understanding of what political economic connections allowed Chan's leaders to procure distant non-Guatemalan obsidian requires the sourcing of obsidian at Xunantunich and other major centers in the Belize Valley, which unfortunately has not been undertaken to date. But as one of the pieces of non-Guatemalan obsidian found at Chan comes from the Pachuca source, which has a distinctive green coloration that allows it to be visually sourced, we can explore how at least this one exotic item arrived at Chan. Kindon and Connell (1999) visually sourced the obsidian from the Xunantunich Archaeological Project collections, which include obsidian from Xunantunich and nearby smaller settlements. Other than the Chan piece, the only Pachuca obsidian in the Xunantunich area comes from the minor center of Chaa Creek (three pieces) and the hamlet of San Lorenzo (one piece); none was identified from Xunantunich (*ibid.*). It does not seem that Xunantunich's rulers had any special claim on the distant trade networks that brought Pachuca obsidian into the Belize Valley. While it remains to be determined through which political economic relationships Pachuca obsidian arrived at Chan, it is clear that it was not through political gifting from Xunantunich. This suggests that the political and economic connections through which Chan's leaders acquired Pachuca obsidian in the Late and Terminal Classic periods were those they had built up with other political centers with which they were involved. Complementing the point we made earlier in relation to Chan's deep historical ties to land and agriculture, we argue that Chan's long-term political and economic ties to a range of political centers in the Belize Valley were also some of the resources that allowed Chan's leaders to develop some form of political constraint on the late-rising Xunantunich polity capital.

CHERT BIFACE AND CUT LIMESTONE BLOCK PRODUCTION BY CHAN'S HUMBLE HOUSEHOLDS

Village-level production of chert bifaces, limestone block, and plaster, in contrast, was the provenance of humble households at Chan. These types of specialized production appear to have developed only in the late Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods at Chan's settlement peak and the height of Xunantunich's florescence (Hearth 2012; Kestle 2012).

A plausible interpretation for the development of community-level specialization in local utilitarian items in Late Classic Chan is that this production

buffers the community against the vagaries of external economic fluctuations in society at the end of the Classic period. As Kestle (*ibid.*) notes, when farming communities limit their dependence on centers for everyday items, they are not only taking practical measures but are also engaging in political action (also see Falconer 1995).

Such local production attests to strategies of buffering used by some but certainly not all of Chan's residents, as the Late Classic was also a time of expanded regional interaction, as seen by Chan's leaders' procurement of marine shell ornaments and non-Guatemalan obsidian. These types of Late Classic economic orientations at Chan are similar to what Eric Wolf (1955) calls open and closed communities. Closed communities turn inward, becoming more self-sufficient as a means to buffer themselves against the exploitative demands of the state by creating greater autonomy from the state. In contrast, in the face of external mechanisms, particularly the exploitative demands of states, open communities emphasize interaction with state authorities and tie their fortunes to outside demands. But rather than see the closed and open communities as types of communities as envisioned by Wolf, it is clear from the Chan case that residents are variably drawing upon closed and open *strategies* to strategically buffer themselves from and expand upon their relations with polities across the Maya area. In their political economic strategies, Chan's residents appear to be active agents aware of and gauging change in the broader Maya world, not passive recipients of that change.

CONCLUSION

Standing on top of El Castillo, the central temple at Xunantunich, and looking 4 km to the southeast, all one sees is a homogeneous mass of trees where the contemporary Belizean forest has reclaimed Chan. Just as the trees at Chan today appear homogeneous, the diversity and complexity of everyday life at Chan is obscured from an anthropological perspective taken from monumental centers looking out onto society. The Chan project aims to promote a change in perspective on Maya society by focusing on the diversity of life in a farming community and turning our archaeological perspective to that of a farming community looking out onto society (Robin 2012, 2013).

From most locations at Chan, if one looks to the northwest, one can see a distant vista of El Castillo. Royal pomp and circumstance are reduced to a small, two-dimensional image in the background of the colorful and dynamic motion of everyday life at Chan. At least in the Late Classic period when

El Castillo was constructed, this small and distant image of monumental construction that was unlike anything at Chan would have been a constant reminder to the people of Chan of the broader world in which they lived. It may also have reminded residents of the limits of their social world and the social differences that existed in their society. As Xunantunich's power waned in the Terminal Classic and the center was abandoned, this distant image may have symbolized something different: the failures of highly centralized and stratified states.

Chan's 2,000-year history, a history of a farming community, is an instructive history. Far from classical and Western notions that polity capitals and their elites drive political economic developments in society and that farmers are a backward, unsophisticated, and unchanging peasantry, Chan's residents were clearly innovators and strategists vis-à-vis the broadest changes in their society. Farmers drew upon local knowledge of land and water to enhance soil management and increase yields, developing an intensified agricultural landscape that fueled political developments rather than being constructed by them. Farmers and other craft producers strategized to both engage with and buffer themselves against expanding external opportunities across the politically turbulent end of the Classic period.

Rising to a height of 45 m in the late Late Classic period, Xunantunich's El Castillo towered over the 24-m-tall temples at the neighboring centers of Buenavista and Cahal Pech. But as impressive a center as Xunantunich was, its rise to power was short-lived. As LeCount and Yaeger (2010) discuss, in the early Late Classic period Xunantunich was a relatively small hilltop center with less power than its political neighbors. Bringing together the archaeological record from Xunantunich and the epigraphic record from the powerful Naranjo polity to the west, in the early part of the late Late Classic period there is dramatic and unprecedented civic and political expansion at Xunantunich, which becomes a powerful but subordinate polity incorporated into the Naranjo regional state. By the end of the Late Classic period, as Naranjo declines, Xunantunich becomes a fully autonomous polity capital with its own emblem glyph (Ashmore 2010; Ashmore and Sabloff 2002; Helmke, Awe, and Grube 2010; LeCount 2010; LeCount et al. 2002; Leventhal and Ashmore 2004). Xunantunich's rulers erect three carved stelae in the early part of the Terminal Classic period, but these royal statements are short-lived, as only 150 years after its rapid expansion, Xunantunich is in decline (Helmke, Awe, and Grube 2010; Schortman 2010).

From the perspective of Chan looking out onto Maya society, the powerful polity capital of Xunantunich appears to have been caught in a double bind of

constraint. From epigraphic texts, at the regional level, Xunantunich rises to power at the end of the Late Classic period, a period during which the system of divine kingship its leaders had adopted was weakening and the powerful Petén polities of its patrons such as Naranjo were experiencing politically tumultuous times and declining. At the local level, Xunantunich is also situated in a provincial part of the Maya world, one with a long history of interacting centers. None of the Belize Valley's major centers reached the level of regional power Xunantunich achieved, but they had their own sources of local power. Even smaller communities such as Chan had developed resources and production and complex webs of sociopolitical and economic relations that constrained the development of a network of dependency by Xunantunich.

As Sheets (2000) notes, the existence of multiple major centers in a region—as was certainly the case in the vicinity of Chan—provided farmers with multiple potential means of affiliation with larger centers, which may have acted as a constraint on the power of any one center. Clearly, Chan had established ties to a number of powerful places, such as those through which it accessed Pachuca obsidian, and these relationships provided a constraint on Xunantunich's power. Chan's residents developed a range of local production, manipulated local resources, and perhaps even played off of competing Belize Valley powers. These local political interactions provided as much of a constraint on Xunantunich's power as did the broader regional political unravelings known from epigraphic texts. Taken together, local and regional political dynamics explain why Xunantunich was unable to dominate resources and production and its rise was relatively short-lived.

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*Conceptualizing the
Spatial Dimensions of
Classic Maya States*

*Polity and Urbanism at
El Perú-Waka', Petén*

DAMIEN B. MARKEN

"Suburbs," wrote Braudel of 15th to 18th century Europe, "housed the poor, artisans, watermen, noisy malodorous trades, cheap inns, posting-houses, stables for post-horses, porters' lodgings." The vision is of suburbs as a second-rate space, where people and activities expelled from the urban centre "washed up" alongside one another. The Roman urban periphery was indeed home to traders and artisans, but it also featured monumental public buildings and wealthy elite housing. The idea of the suburb as a lower-class overspill zone is an anachronism for the Roman world: and, as we shall see, has arguably given rise to misinterpretations of its economic activity. (Goodman 2007:3)

Current archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic data indicate that Classic Maya polities constituted a social community with which local populations identified (whether by choice or coercion), centered on a dynastic capital (e.g., Arnould and Michelet 2004; Canuto 2002; Chase, Chase, and Smith 2009; Demarest 1992; Houston et al. 2003; Sharer 1988, 1993; Sharer and Golden 2004; Smith, Arnould, and Manzanilla 2012; Yaeger 2000). However, with the recognition that "politics primarily involves relationships between, among, and within different polity [i.e., community] types" (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996:4), more studies are needed that systematically identify the entire interaction networks of individual polities (e.g., Iannone 2003; see Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume).

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Attempts to define the full settlement composition of a particular Maya kingdom are relatively rare; few studies in the area have focused on peripheral and inter-site settlement (for exceptions, e.g., Bullard 1960; Chase and Chase 1987; Fedick and Ford 1990; Fialko Coxemans 1996; Ford 1986; Iannone and Connell 2003; Liendo Stuardo 2003, 2011a; Murtha 2009; O'Mansky and Dunning 2004; Puleston 1983; Willey and Leventhal 1979; Willey et al. 1965). Often, this is an understandable result of the logistical difficulties of working in the jungle. Full-coverage survey and mapping in the dense vegetation and broken terrain that dominate the southern lowlands are time-consuming, expensive, and tiring. Nevertheless, research in numerous regions demonstrates the integral role internal settlement dynamics played in the development, composition, integration, and dissolution of ancient sociopolitical structures (e.g., Balkansky 2006; de Montmollin 1989; Fish and Kowalewski 1990; Kowalewski 2008; Peterson and Drennan 2005; Schreiber 1999; Underhill et al. 2008; Webster 2005; Wilson 1990; Wright and Johnson 1975).

The enduring prevalence of the centralized-decentralized debate (see Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume) is in part a result of this “site-centered” approach to much archaeological investigation in the Maya lowlands (see Schwartz and Falconer 1994). Side-stepping the centralized-decentralized dichotomy, Kirk Straight and I recently proposed a “multi-scalar interaction” approach to analyzing Classic Maya polities (Marken and Straight 2007). Drawing from Colin Renfrew’s (1986; see also Price 1977) peer-polity model, we attempted to assess the frequency, degree, and intensity of Palenque’s external interactions using multiple data sets at multiple spatial scales (e.g., Campbell 2009; Glatz 2009; Inomata and Aoyama 1996; Smith and Montiel 2001; Yaeger and Canuto 2000). In the case of Palenque, we found that, combined, certain data sets, which we connected to particular types of interaction, best elucidate interaction at specific spatial scales. For instance, ceramic distributions in the Palenque region indicate relatively intense local social and economic interactions, which spatially coincide with more diffuse distribution of similar ideological themes as evidenced in art and architectural styles. At the (sub-)regional level, inscriptions record both frequent and sporadic political interactions, depending on the site; though less striking, these interactions are largely mirrored in ceramics, art, and architecture. Finally, at the macro-regional (pan-Maya) level, Palenque was an economically isolated, part-time participant in long-distance political relations, whose elites emphasized primarily local and (sub-)regional ideological narratives.

The strength of interpretations derived within a multi-scalar framework is their theoretical and analytical flexibility. A multi-scalar framework is

central to recent network approaches to territoriality (e.g., Campbell 2009; Glatz 2009; Smith 2005), as well as to Mogens Hansen's "City-State Culture" concept (Hansen 2000a, 2000b). Moreover, new data can be incorporated, modifying and refining previous interpretations. New nodes of interaction can be identified, and the nature of old ones can be revised. For Palenque, we selected the most complete and comprehensive data sets available at the time. As Rodrigo Liendo Stuardo (2003, 2011b) and his colleagues expand the surveyed area around Palenque or with the discovery of new inscriptions, interpretations of the nature of Palenque's external interactions will undoubtedly shift. It is the variable correlations, or lack thereof, between different classes of interaction at various scales that form more nuanced and detailed conceptions of Maya polity.

An additional advantage of multi-scalar analyses is their ability to direct future research by isolating classes and scales of interaction where data are lacking. Returning to the Palenque example, regional data at the local scale are limited, largely confined to Robert Rands's (e.g., 1967, 1969) ceramic samples and Liendo Stuardo's (e.g., 2003, 2007, 2011a, 2011b) settlement surveys to the north and east of the epicenter. Higher-resolution data, from household excavations, for instance, would provide an even better understanding of internal polity integration and interaction at the local scale. Continued fine-grained analyses of the materials recovered from the residential excavations within Palenque itself directed by Arnoldo González Cruz (e.g., González Cruz 1993; González Cruz and Bernal Romero 2000; López Bravo 2000; Marken and González Cruz 2007) will better inform processes of social division and interaction within the Palenque urban core.

This last point highlights a handicap of the multi-scalar approach as originally presented by Marken and Straight: its focus on a polity's external interactions. Although largely a result of the forum of that particular publication, we nevertheless did not explicitly examine internal interactions within the Palenque site core as part of the local scale of analysis. Obviously, few scholars, if any, assume that Maya centers were socially monolithic. Research from around the globe indicates that preindustrial urban landscapes were socially heterogeneous, populated by numerous distinct, though potentially overlapping, social groups and identities; and Maya cities and their polities were no different (e.g., Becker 1999; Chase and Chase 1992; Haviland 1963; Hendon 1991, 2009, 2012; Janusek 2003, 2008; Keith 2003; LeCount and Yaeger 2010b; Manzanilla and Chapdelaine 2009; Robertson 2001; M. E. Smith 2008b, 2011; M. L. Smith 2003a; York et al. 2011). In many cases, however, detailed tracking of the internal composition of Maya centers and their

peripheries—the groups constituting the social building blocks of polity—is still in its early stages.

This chapter examines the conceptual and interpretive connections between urban place and polity in Maya archaeology, specifically their spatial articulation and partitioning in light of what we know of how they were conceived by their inhabitants (e.g., Jones 1998; Restall 1997; Roys 1957; Stuart and Houston 1994; Tozzer 1941; see also Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume). Fundamental to the proposed model is the perspective that Maya polities were functionally integrated urban-rural communities, jointly composed of urban populations and institutions and their socially connected hinterlands. From such a perspective, rural Maya were neither fully independent and self-sufficient householders nor passive adherents to centralized governmental demands. Instead, they were active participants in the negotiation of polity (e.g., LeCount and Yaeger 2010a; Netting 1993).

Recent settlement investigations at the Classic Maya city of El Perú-*Waka'* in western Petén, Guatemala, have focused on this issue of settlement distribution and polity composition (figure 5.1). Full-coverage survey at El Perú-*Waka'* has revealed distinct settlement zones across the landscape (Marken 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2011). Together, these zones constituted the urban-rural community of the *Wak* polity.¹ This chapter builds upon previous spatial models of Maya urbanism and polity (see Chase and Chase 1987, 2001; Fash 1983; Hammond 1991; Marcus 1983; Roys 1957) by examining the distribution and occupational history of settlement within the three settlement zones observed at El Perú-*Waka'*: (1) the urban core, (2) the near periphery, and (3) the far periphery (figure 5.2). In addition to a highly nucleated urban core and a relatively dispersed (in terms of overall settlement density) rural hinterland zone, local settlement distributions and topography mark a distinct transitional or “peri-urban,” zone separating the core and hinterlands. As at most Classic Maya centers, settlement follows local topography, creating an irregularly shaped but still concentric urban layout (see Chase and Chase 1987, 2001; Kurjack 1974; Marcus 1983; Puleston 1983). Each settlement zone is defined by relative distance from the site ceremonial epicenter, spatial fluctuation in structure density, and observed changes in geography. A fourth zone, labeled *tintal bajo*, is bisected by the San Juan River and characterized by seasonal inundation, dense, low-lying vegetation, and an absence of observable settlement.

While similar household residences (in form) are present in each zone, they also exhibit distinct residential and public features whose organization and distribution were created by, as well as framed, the integration and negotiation of the *Wak* polity itself. Although these interpretations are reliant on



FIGURE 5.1. *Map of central Maya region.*

surface survey and test excavation data, cross-cultural conceptions of community indicate that the ways settlement is organized and partitioned play an important role in how people conceive and negotiate their political and communal affiliations (Cohen 1985).

EL PERÚ-WAKA': A NORTHWESTERN PETÉN CLASSIC MAYA URBAN PLACE

In 2003, the Guatemalan government awarded Southern Methodist University and the University of San Carlos a multi-year research contract to initiate the El Perú-Waka' Archaeological Project.² A central goal was to begin archaeological investigation of the southeastern section of Laguna del Tigre National Park (PNLDT)—an extensive but poorly known region of the southern Maya lowlands. Investigations at the site have addressed an array of research questions, including the establishment of the site in the Middle to Late Preclassic periods (300 BCE–150 CE), its florescence during the Classic period (250–800 CE), and its abandonment in the Terminal Classic period, around 950 CE (e.g., Acuña 2010, 2011; Acuña and Piehl 2010; Arroyave Prera 2006; Eppich 2007, 2009, 2011; Escobedo and Freidel 2004, 2005, 2006,

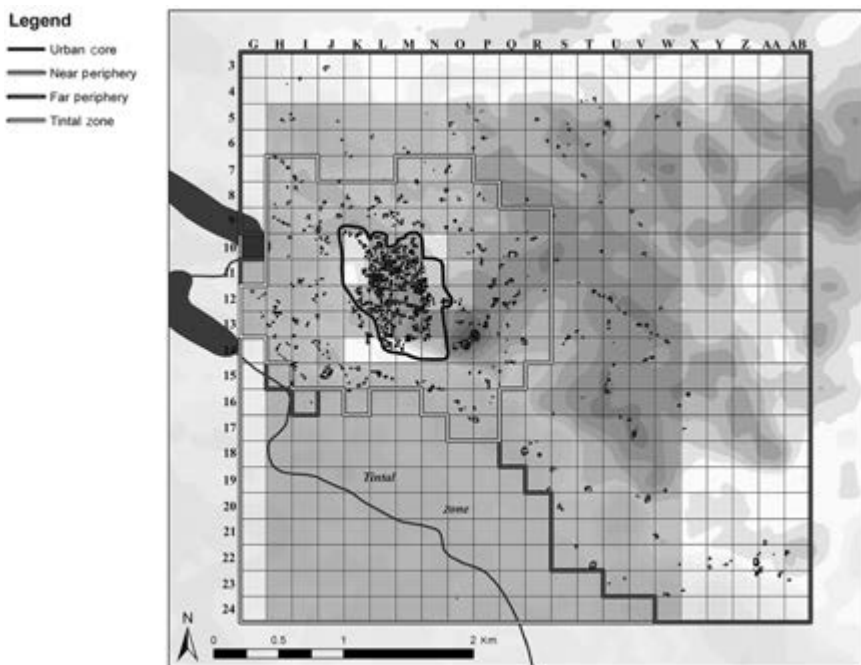


FIGURE 5.2. *El Perú-Waka'* and its settlement zones; full-coverage survey areas shaded.

2007; Escobedo, Meléndez, and Freidel 2008; Freidel and Meléndez 2009; Freidel, Escobedo, and Guenter 2007; Lee 2012; Marken 2011; Meléndez 2007; Navarro-Farr 2009; Rich 2011).

Epigraphic data suggest that *El Perú-Waka'* played an important role in Classic period inter-polity political interactions. Inscriptions indicate that the center was a key player in the antagonistic relationship between Tikal and Calakmul from 500 to 800 CE, repeatedly shifting allegiance throughout its history (Freidel, Escobedo, and Guenter 2007; Guenter 2005:366, 2014; Martin and Grube 2000). To a large degree, ongoing excavations in the center corroborate these epigraphically recorded fluctuations (e.g., Lee 2012; Rich 2011). Furthermore, geographic, ceramic, and epigraphic evidence suggests that *El Perú-Waka'* was situated along two important overland trade routes, one running north-south between the site of Calakmul and the Petexbatun region (e.g., Eppich et al. 2012; Lee 2012; Reents-Budet et al. 2011) and the other east-west between Tikal and the Usumacinta River (see figure 5.1).

Inspired by the benefits of extensive full-coverage survey at Copan (e.g., Willey and Leventhal 1979), Tikal (Becker 1999; Fry 1969; Haviland 1963;

Puleston 1983; see Murtha, chapter 3, this volume), Seibal (Tourtellot 1988), and other sites (e.g., Chase and Chase 1987; Folan, Kintz, and Fletcher 1983; LeCount and Yaeger 2010b), settlement research at El Perú-*Waka*' has explicitly emphasized the systematic documentation of the settlement system that constituted the ancient polity core. Since 2003, full-coverage survey and mapping by members of the El Perú-*Waka*' Archaeological Project has covered 12.72 km² of *Waka*'s urban core and immediate hinterland (see figure 5.2). As the heart of the ancient *Wak* polity, the settlement dynamics of this area reveal much about the historical trajectory of an important Classic period polity.

The settlement data from El Perú-*Waka*' are of additional interest in their ability to advance conceptual models of Maya urban and rural settlement structure and organization. Documenting the area of "transition" from urban to rural settlement, the El Perú-*Waka*' survey suggests a much more complicated relationship between urban and rural Maya populations than has generally been assumed for the Classic period. Moreover, a distinct "peri-urban" zone is apparent at El Perú-*Waka*', reinforcing the need to revisit how we conceive of Classic cities and polities spatially. A growing body of evidence now indicates that traditional urban and rural settlement models, especially those that emphasize a simple urban-rural dichotomy (e.g., Fox 1977; Lefebvre 2003; Redfield 1947; Redfield and Singer 1954), potentially exclude a wide range of variability in Maya settlement forms and their spatial and temporal configuration (e.g., Canuto 2002; Hendon 2012; Iannone 2003; Iannone and Connell 2003; Kunen et al. 2000; Levi 2003; Murtha 2009; Robin, Yaeger, and Ashmore 2010; Tourtellot, Everson, and Hammond 2003; Willey and Leventhal 1979; Yaeger 2003).

DEFINING SETTLEMENT ZONES AT EL PERÚ-WAKA'

In Mesoamerican archaeology, urban zoning models have frequently drawn inspiration from the Chicago School (e.g., Burgess 1925; Hoyt 1939; Park 1915, 1936; Wirth 1938; see also Marcus 1983). For the Classic Maya, the model reconstructed from Landa's description of Contact period Maya centers (Tozzer 1941), with elites concentrated in and around the epicenter and surrounded by a periphery of more dispersed settlement of less wealthy households (essentially the inverse of Burgess's [1925] concentric model), has been adopted widely (e.g., Kurjack 1974).³ Archaeologists are quick to note, however, that such models primarily serve as valuable heuristic devices for organizing and sorting spatially vast sets of information: "A strict interpretation of either concentric model cannot be made to fit Caracol. While it is true that the

terms used in describing the Caracol settlement are based on the idea of ever increasing spheres, this was done to provide divisions to aid in conducting the archaeological research itself; the defining lines between these areas is [*sic*] frequently difficult, nebulous, and anything but circular” (Chase and Chase 1987:58). Moreover, as Marcus (1983:206–8) and others stress, no matter how “clear” distinct urban or settlement zones may appear to the researcher, settlement divisions, even if driven by geology or topography, may not have had equivalent meanings for, or even been recognized, by past residents.

Etic observations of shifts in settlement distribution are nevertheless useful (e.g., Hutson et al. 2008). In a broad sense, El Perú-*Waka'* shares a common settlement profile with many lowland Maya centers: a nucleated urban core (variably sized), surrounded by a continuous landscape of low-density rural settlement (e.g., Fletcher 1995, 2012). Closer consideration of its urban-rural layout, however, reveals a more complex pattern than encompassed by a simple urban-rural dichotomy. Settlement and topography instead suggest three distinct settlement zones at El Perú-*Waka'*: (1) urban core, (2) near periphery, and (3) far periphery (see figure 5.2).

In broad terms, the occupational history of the settlement zones at El Perú-*Waka'* largely mirror reconstructions of dynastic authority and inter-polity interaction until the Terminal Classic period. Test excavations suggest a sparse but relatively even residential occupation in the Terminal Preclassic (100 BCE–250 CE) that expanded in the Early Classic (250–550 CE) and boomed in the Late Classic period (550–800 CE). By the Terminal Classic (800–950 CE), many peripheral settlements were abandoned, while the urban core experienced a smaller or more drawn-out de-settlement (Marken 2011). More detailed examination of El Perú-*Waka'*’s urban-rural layout and zonal occupation history, however, reveals a more complex view of Classic Maya polity development and structure.

At its simplest, an urban core is a public, civic-ceremonial epicenter surrounded by a continuous settlement agglomeration. Therefore, in addition to a monumental center, urban core extent, as defined here, is dependent upon spatial contiguity of high settlement density. Settlement nucleation, however, is not the only manner in which urban limits are identified. Other important cross-cultural features include topographic landscape, the presence/absence of walls and the organization of their layout (whether they enclose the entire core or just certain sectors), orthogonal grid edges, circulation routes and their orientations, monumental markers, and religious delimitations like the Roman *pomerial cippi* (e.g., Goodman 2007; Kostof 1991; Smith 2007; Wheatley 1971). Ultimately, however, etic urban core boundaries are defined by a quantitative

TABLE 5.1 Area (km²) of El Perú-*Waka*' settlement zones within the study area.

Urban Core

<i>Zone/Area</i>	<i>Full-Coverage Sample Area (km²)</i>	<i>Estimated Total Area (km²)⁴</i>	<i>Percent Surveyed</i>
Urban core	0.51	0.61	83.6
Near periphery	3.13	3.27	98.7
Far periphery	5.36	11.32	47.4
Tintal bajo	3.72	4.12	90.3
Totals	12.72	19.32	65.7

and qualitative decline in settlement density, whatever other factors many contribute to that drop-off. In early urban traditions where walls demarcate both epicenter and core, like those of China and the Indus Valley, settlement densities outside the core drop sharply; in other regions such as Mesoamerica, settlement decline can be more gradual.⁵

The El Perú-*Waka*' monumental epicenter is situated near the edge of the 80-m-high escarpment that marks the southwestern corner of the Petén Karst Plateau (Dunning et al. 1998). The city's urban core is defined here as the area of contiguous settlement encompassing the civic center focused on the public Plazas 1-4 (figure 5.3). Features reflecting patterns of land use within the core are varied and include the four public plazas, many massive monumental complexes, a few medium-sized reservoirs, and several "natural" channels that diverted water to the urban peripheries (and potentially to urban gardens along the way).

The most striking aspect of *Waka*' urban settlement, however, is the packed nature of its "residential" surface remains; few Classic Maya sites (Copan, Palenque, Chunchucmil) exhibit such a high structure and population density (table 5.2). Like Copan, the urban core at El Perú-*Waka*' is relatively small (likely under the estimated 0.61 km² estimated here), with its extent primarily bound by geography. While tracts of the western and southern urban core limits are demarcated by the escarpment itself, the southwest corner is marked by a series of large basins, currently filled with palm bajo vegetation and likely created by long-term fracturing of the escarpment. The east edge of the core is delimited by even larger basins, the southernmost of which seems to curve around the elevated Mirador Group before draining down the escarpment into the tintal bajo zone. The northern portion of the urban core is a broad expanse of residential settlement occupying a gradual drop in elevation that

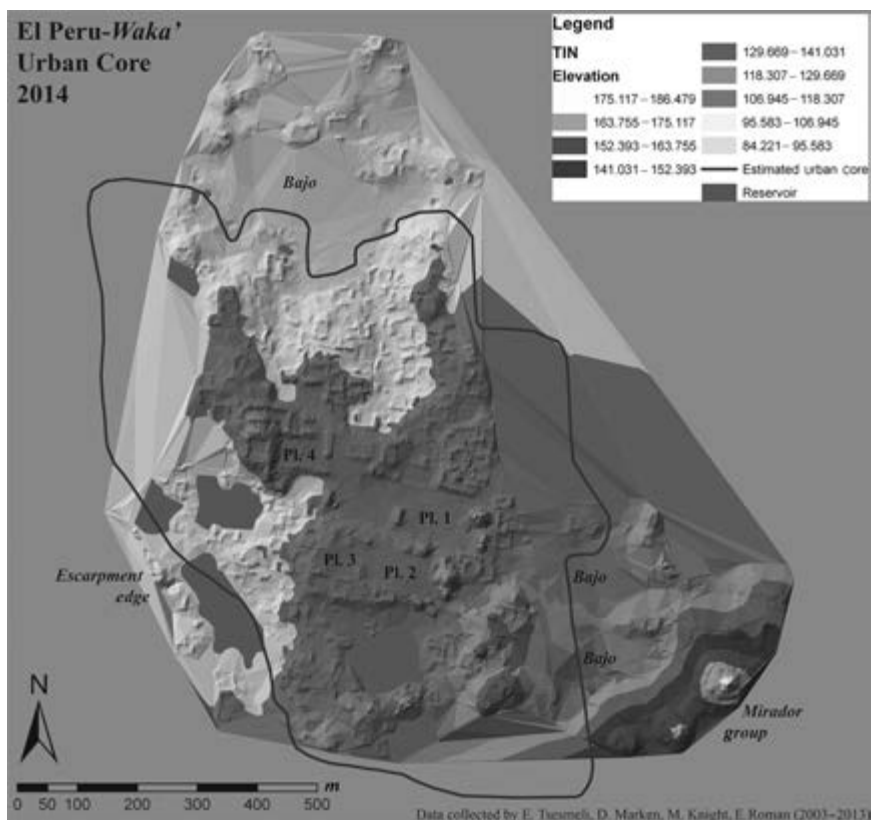


FIGURE 5.3. 3D map of El Perú-Waka' urban core.

culminates in another large basin-like bajo. This decline in topography also coincides with a drop in settlement density. As seen on a map, this “edge” of the urban core can be so subtle as to appear almost nonexistent. On the ground, however, the shift from the continuous settlement of the urban core to that of the near periphery is striking (figure 5.3; see also Marken 2010a, 2011).

This definition of the El Perú-Waka' urban core emphasizes the spatial convergence of an area of high settlement density and congruity with identifiable topographic bounds (escarpment, vegetation-filled basins). Notably, this definition excludes the public/religious architecture of the Mirador Group to the east/southeast. This by no means denies the importance of these buildings and spaces as active, physical, and conceptual symbols of the city and polity. Geographically elevated above the rest of the urban landscape, the large

TABLE 5.2 Structure densities for select Classic Maya cities and their peripheries (from Barnhart 2007; Hutson et al. 2008:26; Lemonnier 2012:185; Marken 2010b, 2011; Murtha 2009; Rice and Culbert 1990:table 1.2; Yaeger 2010).

<i>Site</i>	<i>Area (km²)</i>	<i>Structures/km²</i>
El Perú-Waka' (urban core)	0.61	1,283
El Perú-Waka' (near periphery)	3.27	204
El Perú-Waka' (far periphery)	11.32	65
Tikal (central 9 km ²)	9.0	235
Tikal (9–16 km ²)	7.0	181
Tikal (outside 16 km ²)	104.0	112
Copan (urban core)	0.6	1,232
Copan (pocket)	23.4	84
Palenque (urban core)	2.2	673
Chunchumil (residential core)	8.5	950–350
Caracol (central)	2.2	300
Caracol (Cohune Ridge)	4.1	87
Seibal (central)	1.6	222
Seibal (periphery)	13.6	116
Xunantunich (core)	0.471	168
Quirigua	3.0	128

ancestral pyramids Strs. O14-2 and O14-4 were visibly early and enduring monuments to *Wak* dynastic history and authority (Rich 2011). Nevertheless, the Mirador Group and the mapped areas to the north are topographically separate from, and exhibit a significantly lower structure density than, the defined urban core.

Large-scale excavations of monumental structures and plazas within the epicenter suggest that El Perú-*Waka'* began to serve as an inchoate ceremonial center by the Late/Terminal Preclassic period (100–250 CE). In contrast, residential settlement within the core was relatively sparse (figure 5.4a). Test excavations in residential patios suggest that urban settlement did not become fully nucleated until the Early Classic period (figure 5.4b). By the fifth century CE, El Perú-*Waka'* had grown into an established monumental dynastic and regional population center (e.g., Eppich 2011; Freidel, Escobedo, and Guenter 2007; Guenter 2014; Lee 2012; Marken 2011; Rich 2011).⁶ In the Late Classic, urban residential settlement increased to its maximum density (figure 5.5a), and in the Terminal Classic period residential occupation at El Perú-*Waka'*

decreased slightly (figure 5.5b), while extensive remodeling occurred within the ceremonial and residential core (Eppich 2011; Lee 2012; Navarro-Farr 2009). Although overall urban core occupation decreased in the Terminal Classic, local settlement nucleation in the urban core became even more pronounced because of the congruent depopulation of the hinterlands (discussed later).

NEAR PERIPHERY

Recent decades have witnessed greater archaeological and historical attention to the dense residential and productive settlement areas that occasionally cradled the outsides of ancient city walls, such as those of Mesopotamia, and, later, Roman and Medieval European cities. Commonly referred to as a city's "fauxbourg," these "peripheral" areas constituted active social and economic components of even the earliest walled cities (Goodman 2007; Kostof 1991; van de Mieroop 1997). Penelope Goodman (2007) describes these peripheral zones as "peri-urban," in that their patterns of land use are neither fully urban nor fully rural.

While city walls were a rare feature of lowland Maya urbanism until the Postclassic (for exceptions, see Demarest et al. 1997; Escobedo 1997; Inomata 2006; Puleston and Callender 1967; Webster 1976; Webster et al. 2007), several centers indicate a similarly active belt of slightly dispersed residential settlement encircling most Classic urban cores (e.g., Becker 1999; Chase 1992, 2004; Haviland 1963; Hendon 1991; Hutson et al. 2008; Inomata 2006; Palka 1997; Webster 1989). At *Waka'*, the highly nucleated urban core is not surrounded by a swathe of "dispersed" rural settlement; it is ringed by a still rather dense, and potentially multi-functional, "peri-urban," near periphery.

Settlements comprising this peri-urban zone group into several large "districts" and smaller neighborhoods occupying particular areas of the landscape (figure 5.6; Smith 2011). Directly southwest of the urban core, sandwiched between the central area of contiguous settlement and the escarpment, patios occupy elevated areas surrounded by lower-lying basins currently filled with palm bajo vegetation. These patio groups are often topographically isolated from one another, even when spatially proximate. Detailed topographic mapping of this area (Tsesmeli 2012) suggests that at least some of these basins were part of a system of interconnected reservoirs or irrigated urban gardens (see Scarborough et al. 2012 for a recent potential analogue).

The landscape east of the urban core is marked by significantly larger low-lying areas of bajo vegetation, whose potential anthropogenic manipulation remains ambiguous, and the monumental Mirador Group described above.

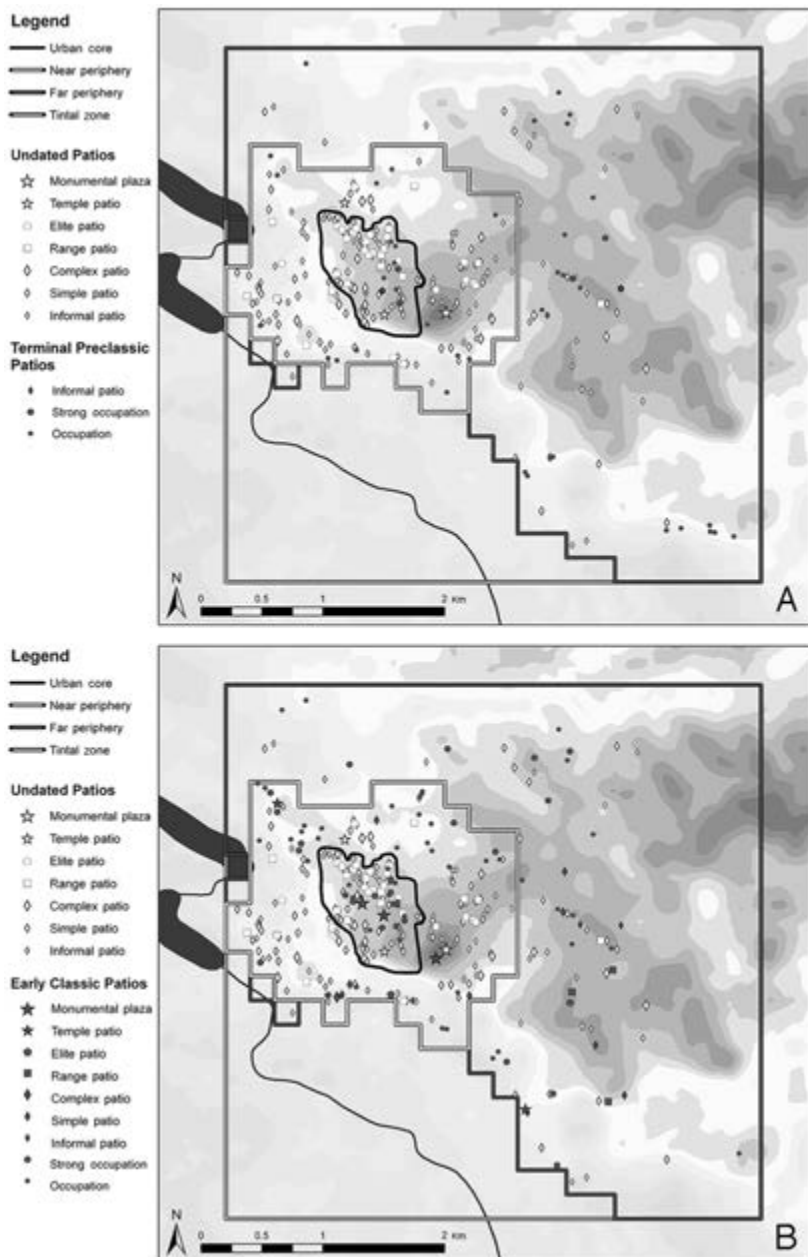


FIGURE 5.4. (a) *El Perú-Waka'* Terminal Preclassic occupations. (b) *El Perú-Waka'* Early Classic occupations.

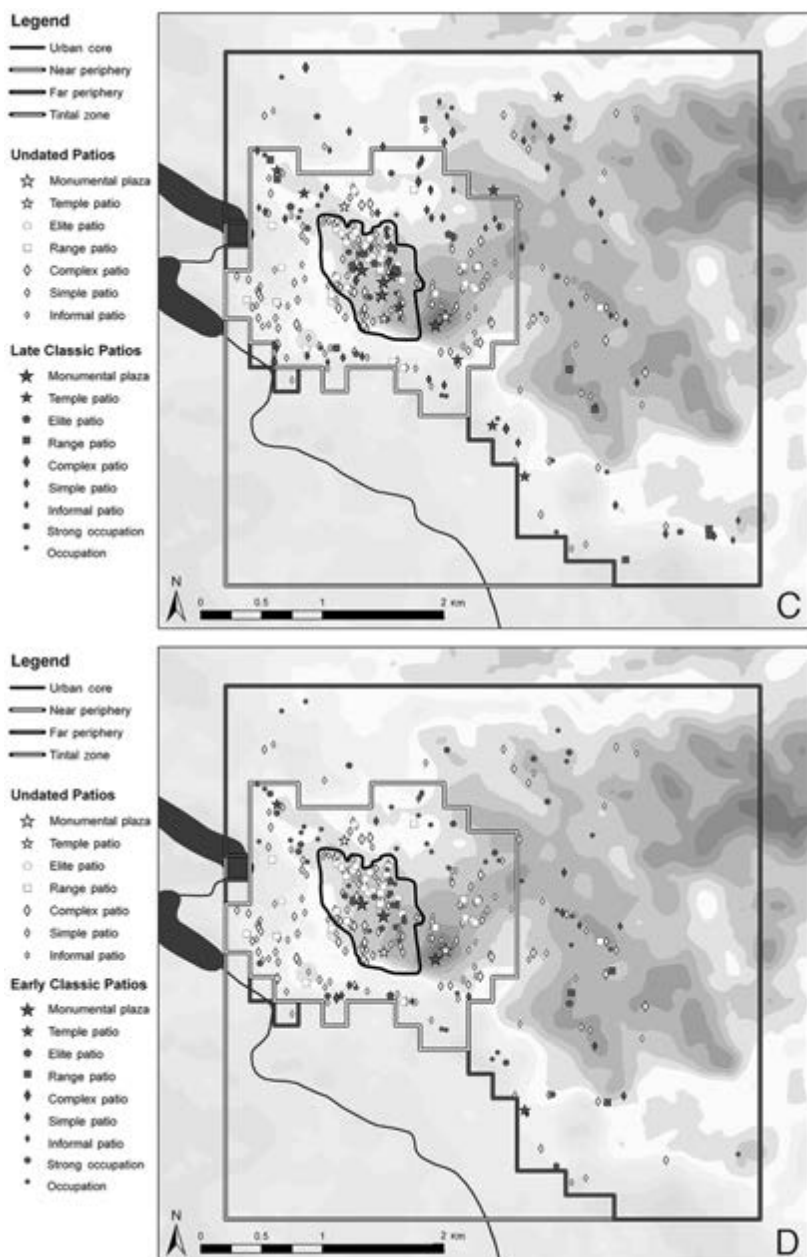


FIGURE 5.5. (a) *El Perú-Waka'* Late Classic occupations. (B) *El Perú-Waka'* Terminal Classic occupations.

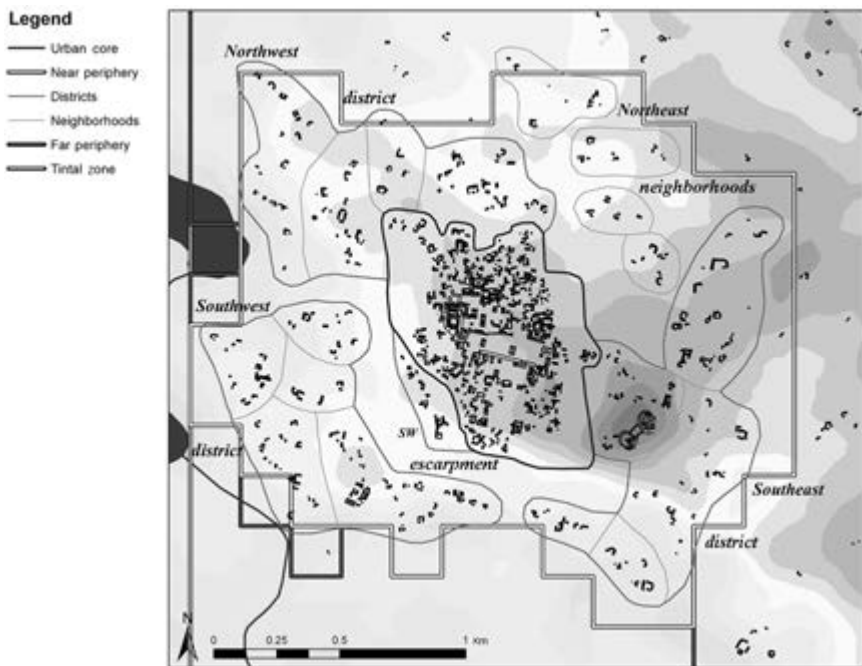


FIGURE 5.6. *El Perú-Waka' near periphery neighborhoods/districts*

This district includes a series of highly developed, in terms of architectural investment, residential groups directly east of the core, as well as several smaller groups along the slope descending southeast from the Mirador Group; a channel cuts south through this area from behind the Mirador temples to a cave at the base of the escarpment.

While the northeast urban core–peri-urban transition is yet unmapped, topography further northeast is dominated by low-lying terrain punctuated by a few “bajo-islands,” primarily occupied by isolated single-patio groups separated by large expanses of bajo.

In contrast, the landscape north and northwest of the urban core is characterized by a more compact series of elevated areas ending at the escarpment on the west. Settlement atop these elevated areas consists of several large patio clusters, many with substantial architectural investment. The northwest corner of the district is dominated by two series of patios atop long ridges. Burial and midden data from multiple patios atop the northern ridge suggest that while their inhabitants were reasonably provisioned with ornamental crafts

and ceramic wealth goods, they lacked regular access to raw materials of the highest prestige, such as jade (López et al. 2010; Marken 2011). Yet buildings among these patios include a 7-m-high pyramidal mound that faces back toward the epicenter.⁷ Continuing eastward, the three remaining “neighborhood” clusters demonstrate a similar pattern of moderate household wealth, punctuated by the occasional high-value item, and substantial architectural construction (ibid.).

Southwest of the urban core, beyond the escarpment, near periphery settlement follows a different set of topographic constraints. Packed between a thin strip of palm bajo at the foot of the escarpment and the wetlands and tinal bajo directly south runs a relatively narrow stretch of well-drained terrain that slowly fans out into a broad upland extent terminating at the wetlands to the west (ibid.; see also Marken 2013). This near periphery district is densely settled and includes a massive hilltop double-pyramid patio group that also faces back toward the urban core.

Comparing confirmed and potential spatial patterns of land use, the urban core and near periphery at El Perú-*Waka'* are most starkly distinguished by the scale of monumentality and residential density within the core. Although possible water management or agricultural features suggest additional land-use activities within the urban core beyond its dominant civic-residential character, the near periphery landscape appears to exhibit a more “balanced” distribution of residential, landscape management, and ritual land-use practices. Full-coverage pedestrian survey and settlement mapping of much of the near periphery (where numerous northern and southern groups have also been intensively tested), when combined with the topographic available data from the urban-periphery transition, depict a multi-use landscape reminiscent in form and features to Roland Fletcher’s (2009, 2012) recent cross-cultural parameters of tropical, low-density, agrarian urbanism (see also Isendahl and Smith 2013). Potential water management features, such as canals, traverse the urban core, some of which drain into the low-lying areas that delimit much of its extent (see Scarborough et al. 2012). Complete topographic mapping of the urban core–near periphery transition, however, is ongoing. Moreover, test and architectural excavations in the mapped transition have been limited to northern residential groups (Ramírez and Marken 2007) and the Mirador Group (Rich 2011, 2013). Nevertheless, the available data also indicate a broad distribution of ritual or political architecture.

Like most of the El Perú-*Waka'* area, Terminal Preclassic near periphery settlement was relatively sparse. In the Early Classic, occupation of these settlements continued but was accompanied by a significant settlement expansion

across the zone. Occupation of the near periphery further increased during the Late Classic period, only to be predominantly abandoned by Terminal Classic times (see figure 5.4b).

FAR PERIPHERY

Archaeologically, rural settlements are more often defined by features they lack rather than by any intrinsic characteristics of their own (Levi 2003). Furthermore, the small size and dispersed nature of individual settlements render collecting representative samples of ancient rural household material culture and analyzing their distribution across the landscape an intensive, long-term endeavor. Larger-scale landscape features, such as communication networks, resource extraction points, agricultural systems, even the delimitations of ancient fields themselves, are also difficult to reconstruct, depending on their durability and the degree to which later land uses impacted their preservation.

The area currently defined as the far periphery only represents a fraction of El Perú-*Waka*'s rural settlement. Within the study area, the far periphery constitutes 11.32 km² (5.36 km² total coverage), of which 6.24 km² are estimated to be habitable (see table 5.1; see Marken 2011). Settlement distribution and chronology also suggest that the far periphery within the study area can be roughly grouped into seven spatial districts or neighborhoods (see figure 5.6; see Becker 2009; Hendon 2009; Manzanilla and Chapdelaine 2009; Smith 2010, 2011; York et al. 2011). Clockwise from north, they are the

1. North Bajo: An expansive district of dispersed settlement ringing the margins of the large bajo to the north of the urban core and near periphery.
2. Northeast Peninsula: A small neighborhood of seven patio groups occupying an upland peninsula protruding into the north bajo.
3. Northeast Uplands: A large district of single- and multi-patio groups distributed across a broad upland expanse northeast of the urban core.
4. Eastern Ridge: A tight cluster of single- and multi-patio groups, dominated by a narrow ridge that runs northwest-southeast.
5. Southeast Escarpment: A district of dispersed multi- and single-patio groups. Groups in this district occupy topographically prominent locations along the escarpment southeast of the Mirador Group.

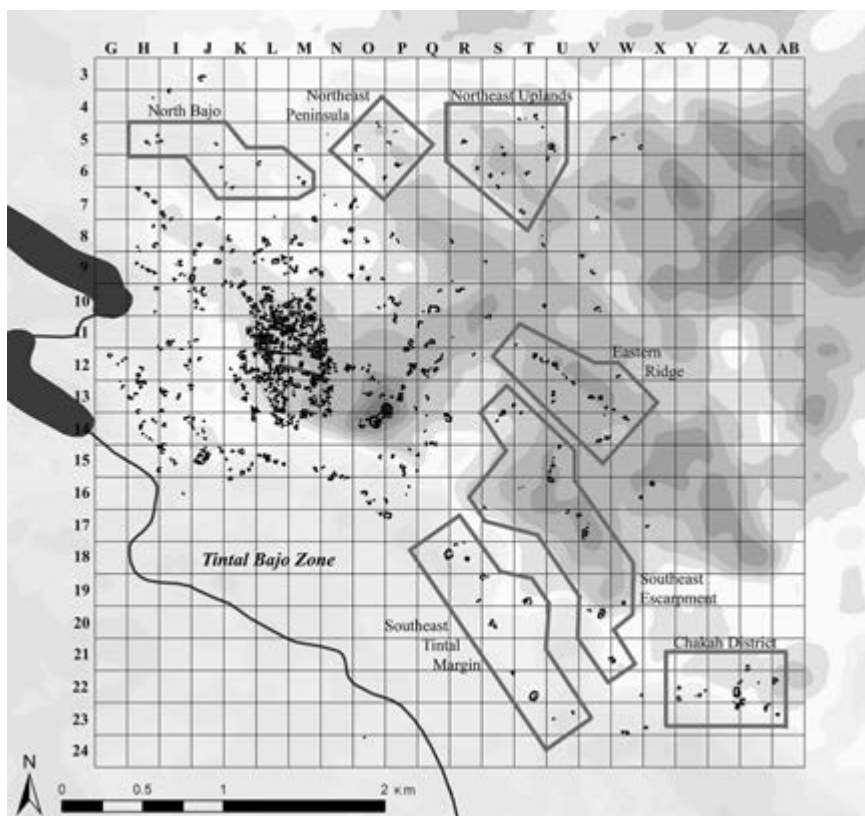


FIGURE 5.7. *El Perú-Waka' far periphery neighborhoods/districts.*

6. Southeast Tintal Margin: A highly linear district marked by three equidistant temple patios located at the base of the escarpment.
7. Chakah district: The multi-patio, elite patio group of Chakah and surrounding settlements.

Similar to the urban core and near periphery during this period, overall rural settlement is dispersed. Nevertheless, the Chakah and Eastern Ridge neighborhoods exhibit slight degrees of nucleation (see figure 5.4a). More significant, the distribution of far periphery Terminal Preclassic occupation foreshadows the settlement expansion of the subsequent Early Classic period; outside of the Chakah area (which was not reoccupied until the Late Classic), all but three Terminal Preclassic rural settlements continued to be occupied in the Early Classic. Far periphery settlement further increases in the Late

Classic, when all districts and neighborhoods, except the Eastern Ridge, reach the height of their occupation. In the Terminal Classic, the northern and eastern far periphery uplands (including the Eastern Ridge neighborhood) were largely abandoned, as were, to a lesser degree, the sub-escarpment Southeast Tintal Margin and Chakah. All far periphery temple patios seem to have also been abandoned by this period.⁸

DISCUSSION

The settlement data from El Perú-*Waka* indicate largely concurrent patterns of urban nucleation and expansion of hinterland occupation for most of the area's history. In the Terminal Classic, however, these patterns diverge, with urban settlement remaining highly nucleated, while the peripheries witnessed widespread depopulation. While too coarse for detailed reconstructions of urban-rural connections and community integration, the survey and test data nevertheless provide key insights concerning the socio-spatial mosaic that formed the heart of the *Wak* polity.

While ancient Maya urbanism is still often referred to as a “low-density” urban form (e.g., Fletcher 1995, 2012; Trigger 2003; York et al. 2011), El Perú-*Waka*'s urban core was small but highly nucleated throughout the Classic period (see table 5.2; see also Marken 2011). When we extrapolate correlations between excavated urban residential masonry and ceramic samples with house-mound and group sizes zone-wide, a substantial portion of *Waka*'s urban inhabitants appears to have possessed a materially “elite” culture (Arroyave Prera 2006; Eppich 2011; Meléndez 2007; Navarro-Farr 2009; Tsesmeli and Marken 2006; see Marken 2011:figure 8.5). Keith Eppich and others have attributed the broad distribution of imported and polychrome ceramics (and local copies) to an active cosmopolitan population participating in a complex network of long-distance socioeconomic relations (Eppich et al. 2012; Freidel, Escobedo, and Guenter 2007; Reents-Budet et al. 2011).

Data from several far periphery settlements suggest that rural groups also played an active, if still poorly understood, role in regional systems of craft production, distribution, and consumption (Marken 2011; Marken et al. 2011).⁹ Recovered materials from two Southeast Tintal Margin groups (figure 5.8), Grps. T19-1 and T22-1, suggest that both were the location of a diverse set of craft activities (see also Halperin and Foias 2010; Hirth 2009; Inomata 2001; Robin et al., chapter 4, this volume; Shimada 2007). Other hinterland groups exhibit similarly strong evidence of lithic tool refurbishing (and possible production), but artifacts recovered from these groups also indicate the

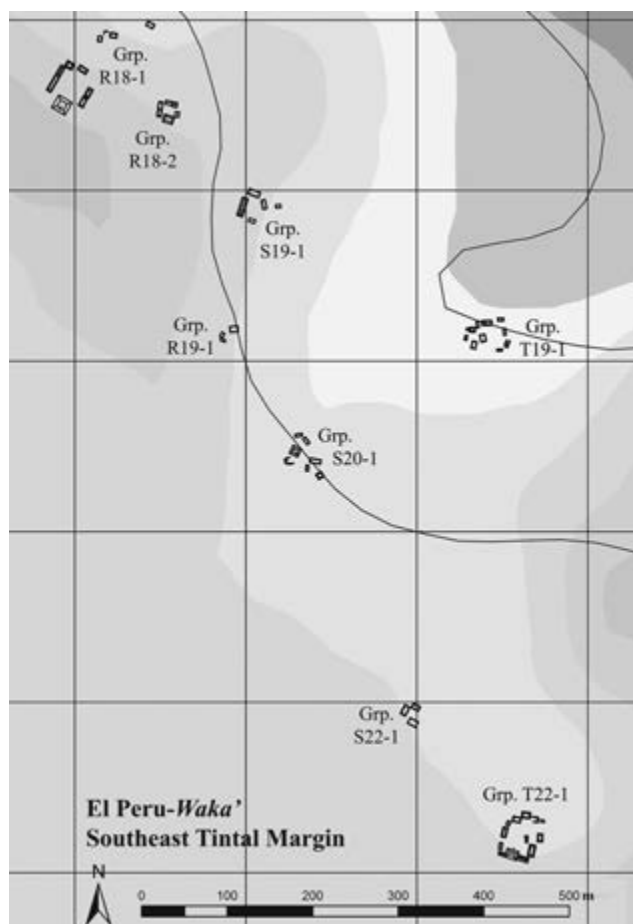


FIGURE 5.8. *Map of Southeast Tintal Bajo Margin.*

occurrence of craft activities not often evidenced at El Perú-Waka'. A series of test excavations at the relatively unimposing Grp. T19-1 (eastern patio) have recovered strong evidence of shell working, as well as more limited spindle whirl production (Marken et al. 2011; Menéndez 2008, 2009a, 2009b). At Grp. T22-1, test excavations encountered three stones likely used to polish beads of varying sizes. The diameters of the holes left by the beads do not overlap, suggesting the stones may have formed a set. Additional craft activities suggested by the hinterland test data include paper making, as well as widespread subsistence-oriented unifacial (chert) tool production and grinding stone surface rejuvenation.

The Southeast Tintal Margin may be of further interest to better understand urban-rural interactions at El Perú-*Waka'*. The neighborhood is marked by a set of three roughly equidistant temple patios (Grps. R18-1, S20-1, and T22-1). The temple patio groups are situated half a kilometer apart, each occupying topographic grades extending into the tintal bajo margin from the escarpment. Neighborhood settlement structure and group layouts and chronologies suggest that rural pyramid construction and use were likely linked to Early Classic efforts to incorporate the neighborhood into urban-based political-ritual networks (Marken 2014).

Southeast Tintal Margin temple patio occupation began in the Terminal Preclassic at Grp. S20-1. The group consists of two patios, one residential (S20-B) and one with a pyramid structure focus (S20-A), both of which were occupied through the Terminal Preclassic to Late Classic. The earliest confirmed architectural phase of the pyramid structure, however, was built in the Early Classic and then modified in the Late Classic (Marken 2011; Menéndez 2008).¹⁰ The establishment of temple patios north and south of Grp. S20-1 (Grps. Q18-1 and T22-1) can be narrowed to the Early Classic as well.

Settlement organization and layout at Grp. S20-1, however, differ from those of its northern and southern neighbors (figure 5.9a). Patio S20-A is small in area and in the number of structures. Directly adjacent is the seemingly contemporaneous simple residential Patio S20-B. In contrast, Grps. R18-1 and T22-1 are dominated by large temple-focused patios; the two outlying Southeast Tintal Margin temple patios are nearly identical in size, layout, and orientation (figure 5.9b and 5.9c; Marken 2011). This temple patio orientation is also seen at Patio CP-A of the Chok Group in the urban core (and Patio J15-A in the near periphery). The orientation of these residential temple patios is also perpendicular to the axes of Plazas 1 and 2 of the ceremonial center (Marken 2014).

The Early Classic founding of Grps. R18-1 and T22-1 coincides with a significant rise in occupation of both the *Waka'* urban core and hinterlands and may represent a concerted effort by urban interests to establish rural settlement and resource extraction nodes in a sector of the city's hinterlands adjacent to the tintal bajo. While broader household excavations across the urban core and peripheries would certainly improve our knowledge of the social components forming the multiple channels of interaction that once bound the *Wak'* polity, current data suggest an intertwining of economic heterogeneity and ideological hierarchy that conflict with simple centralized-decentralized models of Maya polity (Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume; see Chase and Chase 1996; Fox et al. 1996; Iannone 2002; LeCount and Yaeger 2010a; Robin et al., chapter 4, this volume; Scarborough and Valdez 2003).

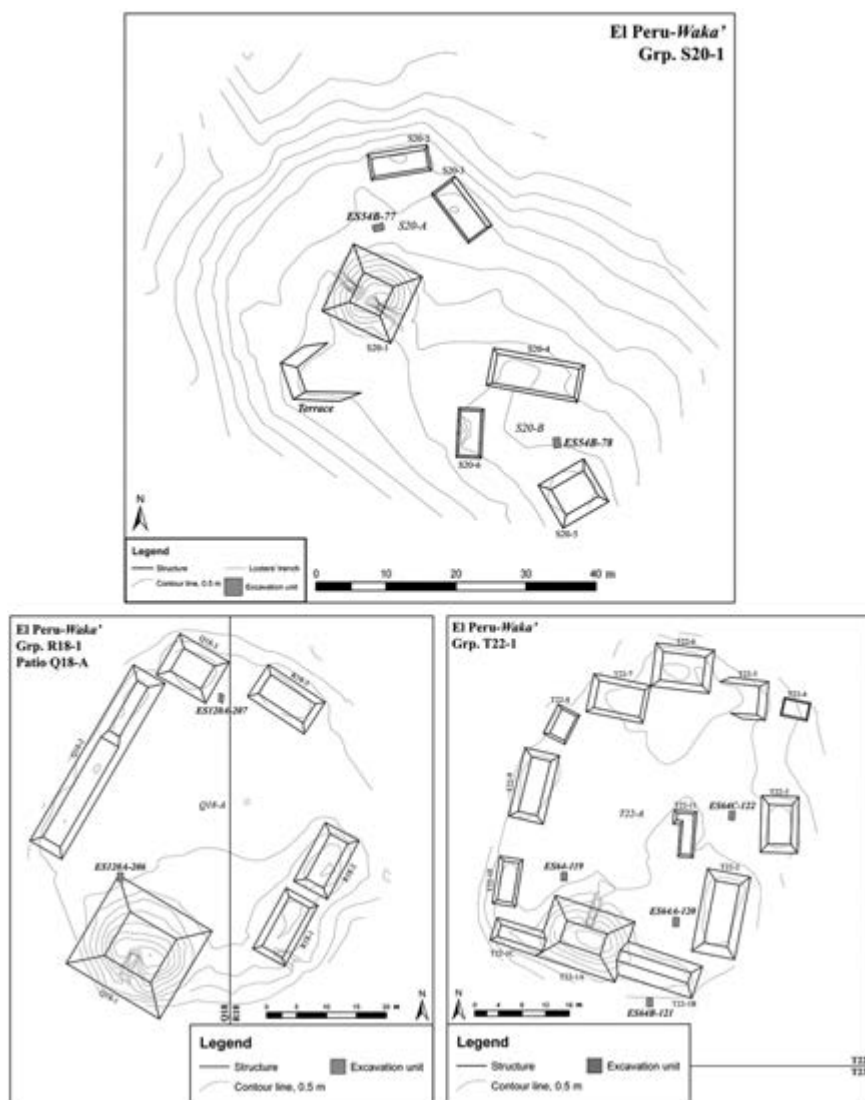


FIGURE 5.9. (a) Map of Grp. S20-1; (b) map of Grp. T22-1; (c) map of Grp. R18-1.

SPATIAL CONCEPTIONS OF POLITY AND COMMUNITY

The severe distinction sometimes made between the “urban” and the “rural” throughout the social sciences is in many ways a result of their collective theoretical origin in the sociology of industrialized society (e.g., Durkheim

1893; Park 1936; Redfield 1947; Wirth 1938). Michael Smith (2008a), for one, has demonstrated that Central Mexican central places (the equivalent of a “Maya site”) were marked by certain architectural features (temple, palace, ball court) no matter their overall size and functioned as the physical nexuses of polity identity (see also Hirth 2003). Like the Aztec, Colonial period Maya made little distinction, in terms of “citizenship,” between central (urban) and hinterland (rural) inhabitants (Okoshi-Harada 2012; Roys 1957; Vogt 1993; see also Marcus 1983, 1993; Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume). “Citizens” were instead counted in terms of social and political affiliations, which could be organized across multiple and potentially cross-cutting conceptual and spatial scales. While lacking an equivalent model of Classic period conceptions of polity, epigraphically recorded “declarations” of origin and political affiliation indicate that Classic Maya ideas of polity were also closely tied to individuals and place (Berlin 1958; Marcus 1993; Marken, Guenter, and Freidel n.d.; Stuart and Houston 1994; Tokovinine 2013).¹¹ Royals consistently identify themselves with specific Emblem Glyphs and toponyms, while their subordinates are generally labeled by their relation to the *ajaw* (and sometimes a toponym).

Even when emic definitions spatially distinguish city and countryside, pre-industrial concepts of civic community generally did not envision a “clear *political* and *cultural* separation” between urban and rural domains (Goodman 2007:235, original emphasis; see also Hansen 2006; Smith, Arnould, and Manzanilla 2012:viii). Nevertheless, the prioritization of urban centers by history and archaeology has fostered an almost anecdotal understanding of rural functions in urban societies (see Canuto and Fash 2004). Urban societies as a whole are in fact more accurately described as “urban-rural communities” (Hubbard 2006). By accepting the dualistic and recursive nature of the urban and rural relationship, the concept of the “urban-rural community” provides a more inclusively integrated socio-spatial unit closer in line with emic notions of urban communities as socially defined, territorially fluid, political units (e.g., Connell 2003; Iannone 2003; Okoshi-Harada 2012:291, 293; Smith 2005).

While some researchers still disagree as to whether we should apply the term *city* to Maya centers, a functional definition broadens the range of settlements to be included under the urban heading and prioritizes “function” over “form” (Cowgill 2004:526; M. E. Smith 2008a:172; M. L. Smith 2003b; Trigger 1972; Wheatley 1972). Such an analytical shift facilitates comparison of population clusters across widely differing cultural contexts. Moreover, functionally defined cities, regardless of their size or economic role in society, tend to serve as the locations where political and administrative institutions

cluster, directly linking cities to the state systems of which they are a part (Hansen 2000b:12; Wheatley 1972:601; see Marken and Fitzsimmons, chapter 1, this volume).

The analytical and conceptual link between “city” and “state” is critical, especially in regions where residents do not necessarily sharply distinguish between the two. Ethnohistoric and historic data from Mesoamerica, as well as Mesopotamia, Greece, and Africa, indicate that the “city” was not conceptually separable from its supporting territory but was simply more recognizable with the presence of the ruler and his residence (Flannery 1998; Hansen 2000b; Inomata and Houston 2001; Kusimba, Kusimba, and Agbaje-Williams 2006:157; Marcus 1983:207; Smith 2008a:89; Storey 2006:21). While these interpretations are ultimately derived from the same central-place theories that inspired Bruce Trigger’s “functional urban criteria” (Trigger 1972; see Smith 2008a:6), they emphasize the social relationships and networks that integrate cities and their hinterlands, what Monica Smith calls the “cognitive formulation of urban centers” (Smith 2003b:7; see also Morris 2006:28). Maya centers are then best envisioned as functionally variable parts of “polity-scapes”—the spatial clustering of population and institutions within a larger social mosaic and regional settlement and political system (see Campbell 2009; Hansen 2000a, 2000b; Liu and Chen 2003; Okoshi-Harada 2012; Smith 2005:832; Stanton and Magnoni 2008; Villamil 2009). Such a vision of Maya cities also shares much with recent spatial conceptions of low-density agrarian urbanism, as described for Angkor Wat and suggested for the lowland Maya (e.g., Evans et al. 2013; Fletcher 2009, 2012; Scarborough et al. 2012). By viewing Maya cities as primary “nodes” upon a networked regional landscape, archaeological interpretations of Classic political organization can more explicitly consider the interactive links between urban and rural Maya populations—the internal social and political relationships that in fact formed the physical and demographic constitution of Classic Maya polity.

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NOTES

1. Epigraphic data from the site epicenter suggest a potential emic distinction between city as place (*Waka'*) and polity as community or “territorial” unit (*Wak*) (Guenter 2005).

2. David Freidel and Héctor Escobedo served as the founding project co-directors until 2006, when Escobedo stepped down and was replaced by Juan Carlos Meléndez until 2009. In 2009, Jennifer Piehl and Mary Jane Acuña joined Freidel as co-directors. In 2011, Juan Carlos Pérez took over as co-director, replacing Acuña. For full lists of project members by year, the reader should refer to the yearly field reports.

3. See, however, arguments by Peter Harrison (1981) and Laura Villamil (2009) for multi-centric patterns of Maya settlement.

4. Areal estimates of urban zones at El Perú-*Waka'* remain preliminary. Ongoing topographic mapping of the urban core–near periphery transition, under the direction of Evangelia Tsesmeli and the author, will likely confirm a physically smaller but more nucleated core than represented by these figures. Furthermore, the El Perú-*Waka'* far periphery is undoubtedly larger than the sample presented here.

5. Urban cores were not merely defined by their limits but also by internal compositional divisions and interaction networks. The urban built environment is the palimpsest of innumerable short- and long-term household and civic decisions regarding settlement, subsistence, ritual, and community integration. At any given point in time, however, urban practice and individual decision-making are constrained by the existing natural, built, and social landscapes (e.g., Rappaport 1988; A. Smith 2003).

6. That said, large-scale horizontal and vertical excavations, as well as certain tests, suggest that current test excavation data may underrepresent Early Classic residential occupations within the urban core. Several of these excavations have uncovered deeply buried early levels, indicating that the early urban core included both early monumental works as well as potential elite residences (Arroyave Prera 2006; Eppich 2011; Escobedo and Meléndez 2007; Meléndez 2007; Ramírez 2006; Ramírez and Marken 2007; Rich 2011). Detailed investigation of Early Classic residential contexts has been sporadic, however, as they are almost universally buried beneath massive occupational and architectural overburden from the Late and Terminal Classic.

7. The width and direction of the elevated ridge where this pyramidal mound, Str. H7-1, was constructed were most likely the principal determinants of its orientation.

8. Terminal Classic occupation of T22-A was likely sparse compared to earlier periods. The Terminal Classic ceramics from Grp. T22-1 are restricted to shallow contexts on the margins of the settlement.

9. The two groups discussed here were the targets of multiple test excavations. Though not included, data from Chakah also highlight the potential participation of rural populations in inter-polity interactions. Hieroglyphic evidence (ceramic) from the main plaza at Chakah (Patio Z21-A) suggests a relationship between Chakah leaders and El Zotz elites (Eppich 2011; Stanley Guenter, personal communication, 2012).

10. Unlike most hinterland chronological information, these data are derived from the cleaned profiles of the looters' trench that once pierced Str. S20-1. The looters' trench was subsequently backfilled to stabilize the building.

11. Cross-culturally, the emphasis on a common geographic origin is not limited to political ideologies. Regardless of whether they are embraced and advertised by nationalist ideologies, ethnic affiliations often recognize an accepted and shared association with a specific place of origin or homeland (e.g., Berdan 2008; Emberling 1997).

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*Tomb 68-1, Copan**Deducing Polity Dynamics
during the Early Classic
Period and Beyond*

ALLAN L. MACA

This chapter focuses on a monumental tomb context as a means to deduce polity dynamics at Copan. Central goals are to offer avenues that allow us to examine how the Copan polity functioned at two critical points in time—pre-apogee, circa AD 600, and pre-collapse, circa AD 775—and to examine the character and force of Copan's power more generally. In this volume (e.g., see Marken and Fitzsimmons, introduction, this volume) and elsewhere (e.g., Foias 2013; Iannone 2002; LeCount and Yaeger 2010; Marcus 1983, 1998), we see that it has become imperative to attempt to transcend many of the simplistic and polarizing categories used to characterize ancient Maya polities, such as “centralized” and “decentralized,” “unitary” and “segmentary,” or “super power.” These categories are starting points at best, heuristic devices designed to be modified, not to be relied on. They are rarely able to explain the countless examples of nuance, overlap, ambiguity, and fluctuation in polity forms across time and space. They also cannot convey what power exchanges look like “on the ground.”

I try to be less concerned here overall with whether Copan was centralized at any point in time; all “polities” express some significant degree of centralization simply by definition. This chapter will be concerned more broadly with examining evidence for the social interactions, institutions, and relationships that linked people and groups at Copan. I will attempt to achieve this breadth with a focused presentation of a specific data set from an unusual funerary context.

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The bulk of this chapter is an overview of the results of the excavation and analysis of a monumental tomb discovered in Copan's El Bosque zone, known as Tomb 68-1; special attention is given to the tomb's context and its relationship to the settlement history and urbanization of Copan. These results serve as the basis of a closing discussion regarding the dynamics of the Copan polity at specific "turning points" during the Classic period. I argue therein that Copan is an unusual case study because of its long-term integration of non-local elements, its shifting identity within the larger geopolitics of Mesoamerica, and its reliance on social memory for purposes of statecraft. In particular, I propose that we consider the new Bosque data in the context of Robert Sharer's (2004) suggestion that the mid-sixth-century conflict between Calakmul and Tikal had a radical impact on Copan, its rulers, and the future of the polity.

TOMB 68-1, EL BOSQUE, COPAN

In the Copan alluvial pocket, the El Bosque archaeological zone (hereafter "the Bosque") lies in the southwestern corner of the Copan National Archaeological Park (figure 6.1), bordering the Copan River to the south and private farmlands to the west. From 2005 to 2007 excavations targeted Group 11K-6, a monumental architectural complex consisting of two principal plazas and approximately ten mounds. Four of these mounds, each measuring 3–4 meters in height, delineate the secluded main plaza, Plaza A (figure 6.2). El Proyecto Arqueológico para la Planificación de la Antigua Copán (PAPAC), directed by Maca, conducted extensive excavations across the site as well as surveying and test pitting operations in several adjacent areas of the Bosque zone. The project goals were twofold: (1) to determine the timing and character of the growth of this sector of the ancient city and, in particular, to test two hypotheses for eighth-century social organization and urban planning (Maca 2006; Plank 2004); and (2) to assess damage to and—where possible—consolidate the remains of mounds that have suffered systematic and opportunistic looting since the 1970s.

The project made an unexpected discovery in 2005 at the western mound of Plaza A, Str. 11K-28. Nearly the entire west wall of the Str. 28 substructure had been looted, its cut blocks sold to construction projects in the modern village nearly forty years ago. The top of the mound demonstrated a nearly 2-m-wide, 30-cm-deep divot, which, based on other evidence at Copan, initially appeared to be the result of opportunistic looting in the last twenty-five years. In cooperation with the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and

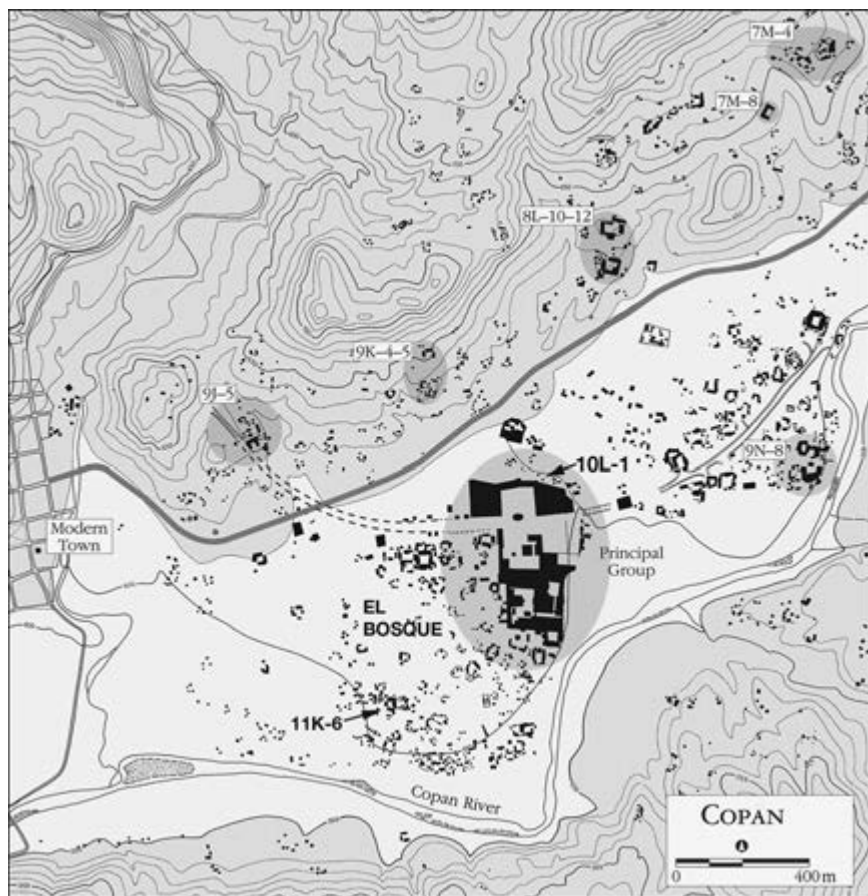


FIGURE 6.1. *The Copan alluvial pocket and major Classic period architectural groups and zones mentioned in the main text. A modern highway, running northeast from the modern town, separates the foothills from the bottomland (modified from Fash and Long 1983).*

History, we undertook large-scale consolidation of the mound and also excavated a 1 x 1 m probe down through the center of the mound to understand its construction history.

The probe was placed in what turned out to be an ideal location: the precise center of a deep cut-stone shaft leading to a “split-vault” subterranean tomb dating to the end of the Early Classic period, measuring 6 meters from top to bottom (shaft and tomb) and designed explicitly for re-entry. What we thought

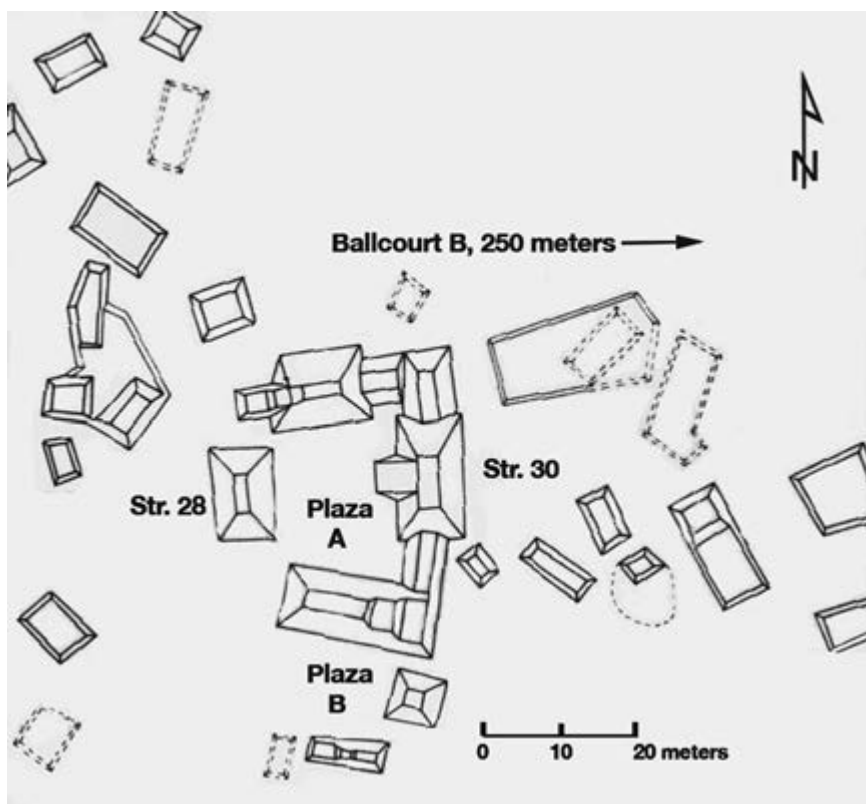


FIGURE 6.2. Group 11K-6 in the Bosque (modified after Fash and Long 1983).

was wrought by looters was actually the result of settled fill in the access shaft. Much to our surprise, given that we were working in the Bosque (450 meters southwest of the grand tombs of the Acropolis), PAPAC had uncovered one of the most intriguing tomb structures ever found at Copan—in fact, the entirety of Str. 28 is the tomb. As discussed below, the tomb's skeletal and cultural material also constitutes a rare context, but it is important to highlight how unique the location of this kind of tomb is in the larger context of Copan.

THE TOMBS OF COPAN'S ACROPOLIS

To date, evidence for monumental tombs at Copan has been isolated to the Principal Group. For the Late Classic period (AD 600–900) there are several notable vaulted tombs found on the Acropolis (figure 6.3). Among

these are the massive tomb vault of Str. 10L-18 (Fash 2001:177), believed to be the tomb of Copan's sixteenth king, Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, who ruled from AD 763 to 820 (cf. Martin and Grube 2008:209), and the extraordinary tomb set into the Chorchá structure beneath the original Hieroglyphic Stairway Str. 10L-26 (ibid.:108–12), belonging to Copan's twelfth king, K'ahk' Uti' Witz' K'awiil, also known as Smoke Jaguar (AD 628–695). Both 10L-18 and 10L-26 were elaborate funerary structures arguably built to house well-documented rulers. The Galindo tomb, named for the nineteenth-century explorer who discovered it, is another well-known Late Classic vaulted tomb with interior niches, visible today as the first stop on a tunnel tour of the Acropolis. No bone remains are known from the Galindo tomb nor do we have any other evidence regarding its occupant or function.

For the Early Classic period at Copan there are a number of tombs known from the Acropolis. These are less monumental than the grandest of the Late Classic tombs, but they are equally or more intriguing, not least for the broad evidence of tomb re-entries. The circular (unvaulted) Teotihuacan-style Motmot tomb, dating to the early fifth century, is located in the building of that name and rests well beneath the Late Classic original Str. 10L-26 (Fash et al. 2004). Farther south on the Acropolis are several other important tombs, including the Hunal tomb—almost certainly the tomb of the dynastic founder—dating to AD 437 (Bell et al. 2004). Two other Early Classic tombs are notable in part because they suggest re-entry: namely, the Oropéndula tomb, dating to approximately AD 500 (Fierer-Donaldson 2012), and the famed Margarita tomb, which likely belonged to the wife of the dynastic founder, dating to the fifth century (Bell et al. 2004). The Oropéndula tomb had cinnabar scattered over bone remains, suggesting post-decomposition rituals, and the Margarita tomb consists of two chambers and a staircase that may have led later generations to the queen's burial slab. To reiterate, all of the above-mentioned tombs are located in association with Acropolis structures in Copan's ceremonial and administrative core, or Principal Group. Nakamura (2000) found a possible royal burial in a field one kilometer west of the Acropolis at Gr. 10J-45, but this was a simple sub-floor interment set into a patio and is likely a secondary burial. Evidence for monumental tombs outside of the Acropolis was wholly lacking until PAPAC's discovery of Tomb 68-1 in the Bosque. In fact, no one ever anticipated a monumental tomb to be found beyond the Acropolis. The existence of Tomb 68-1 begs us to reframe a number of long-held perspectives regarding Copan's settlement history and polity dynamics during the Classic period.

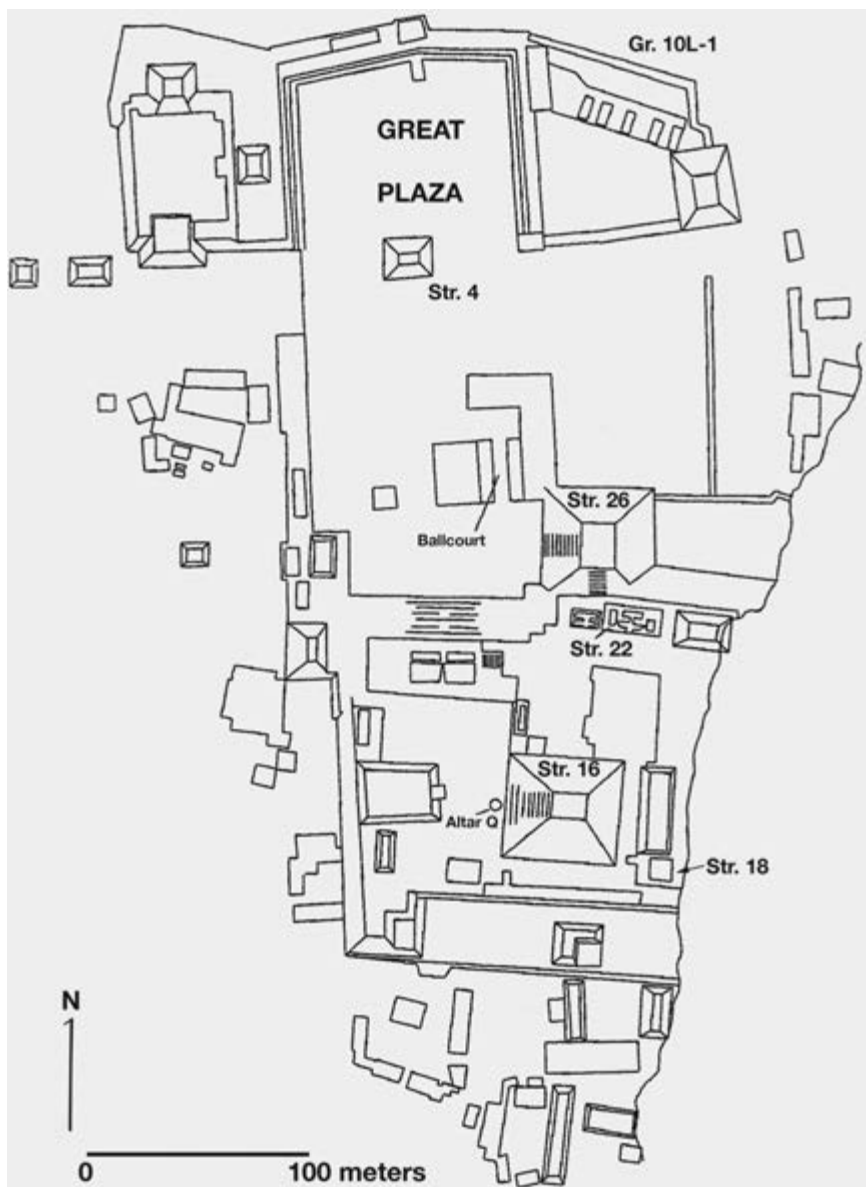


FIGURE 6.3. *The Principal Group of Copan, indicating the major structures mentioned in the main text.*

THE PAPAC EXCAVATIONS IN THE BOSQUE

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

It is now accepted that the vast majority of the ancient mounds and surface structures in the Copan alluvial pocket date to the end of the dynasty, that is, the late eighth century and the reign of the final great king, Yax Pasaj. Working independently, Maca (2006) and Shannon Plank (2004) conducted studies of Copan's late eighth-century sociopolitical organization based on high elite (Type 3 and Type 4) architectural complexes. Maca, employing settlement pattern analysis, and Plank, using textual and architectural data, argue that many of the monumental elite compounds in the valley were constructed as royal mandates during the rulership of Yax Pasaj (the sixteenth king) and that they served as replications of and references to the architectural program and urban planning schemes of the thirteenth ruler, Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil, also known as 18 Rabbit. Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil ruled Copan during its apogee (Bill 2014), from AD 695 until his death at the hands of Quirigua, a vassal state, in AD 738. To further test their hypotheses, Maca and Plank designed the PAPAC excavations in the Bosque in 2005, focusing on one of the largest (and most heavily looted) plaza groups in the Bosque zone, Gr. 11K-6, considered a "Type 4" elite group in the Harvard typology (Fash and Long 1983; Willey and Leventhal 1979).

For decades we have known that many historical and modern Maya towns were defined by cardinal places and a quadripartite division of space (Coe 1965; Fox and Cook 1996; Hanks 1990; Jones 1998; Sosa 1985). Thanks to work at La Milpa in Belize (Tourtellot, Estrada Belli, et al. 2003; Tourtellot, Wolf, et al. 2000), we now know that some Classic Maya cities also were organized by cardinal places and a quadripartite division of space, probably linked to sociopolitical and religious ideologies associated with the Mesoamerican quincunx (a delimiting scheme consisting of five objects or locales, with four in the corners and one in the middle). Fash (1983a) and Ashmore (1991) have proposed related urban-planning schemes based on cardinally located elite architecture and the presence of east and west roads (*sakbes*). Maca (2002, 2006) follows Fash and Ashmore in certain details but diverges from their framework by focusing on a specific category of elite architectural form. He draws attention to the cardinal locations of Copan's U-groups, defined as a monumental U-shaped arrangement of buildings around a plaza (Tourtellot 1988). At Copan there are five of these (figure 6.4).

The largest U-group at Copan, Gr. 10L-1 (figure 6.1), frames the Great Plaza of the Principal Group, site of the famous series of carved stelae dedicated by the thirteenth ruler, Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil. This is the center

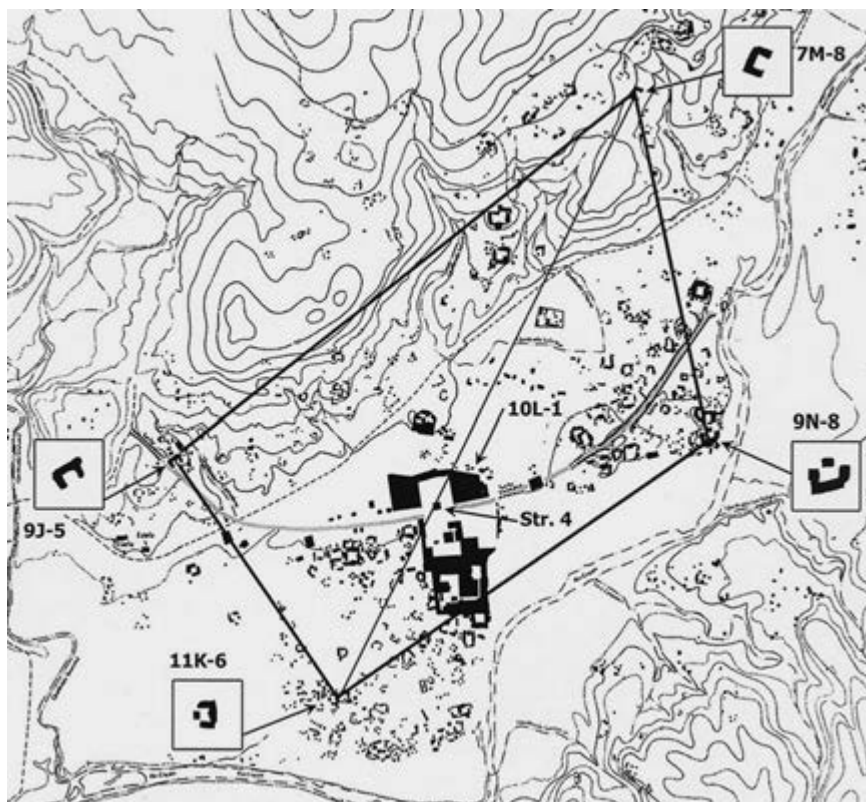


FIGURE 6.4. *The five U-groups in the Copan pocket of the Copan Valley. Lines drawn between outlying groups roughly coincide with settlement density drop-offs. Diagonal line drawn between dominant structures of Groups 11K-6 and 7M-8 passes through Str. 4 of central U-group, suggesting exact locations of south and north U-groups are not random. Note also that outlying U-groups open to the cardinal directions (modified after Fash and Long 1983).*

of the quincunx. The primary plaza architecture at Gr. 9J-5 (in the western foothills) and Gr. 9N-8 (site of the Scribe House) are each U-groups and are aligned east-west of one another, separated by two kilometers. These form the east and west nodes of this cardinal scheme. Maca (2002) identifies another U-group in the eastern foothills, at Gr. 7M-8, as the northern node. The southern U-group is marked by Plaza A at Gr. 11K-6 in the Bosque, site of the PAPAC excavations. Besides the five cited here, there are no other known U-groups at Copan.

The Great Plaza of the Principal Group and its U-group have their origins during the *early* eighth-century reign of the thirteenth ruler (Schele and Mathews 1998). Today, *late* eighth-century dates have been confirmed for all the outlying U-groups (including Gr. 11K-6 in the Bosque); and each of their associated sites have been found to have been settled earlier, with the U-groups appearing late in time only, that is, during the reign of Copan's last great ruler, Yax Pasaj. Thus, Maca's working hypothesis is that the U-groups beyond the Principal Group were built by the sixteenth ruler, Yax Pasaj, as referential iterations of the U-group that defines the epic Great Plaza of Ruler 13. Yax Pasaj's cardinal U-groups integrated the urban community and established an urban plan with a dynastic stamp legitimized by a famed predecessor, Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil (Maca 2006).

The copying and use of Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil's "classic" architecture by Yax Pasaj is not restricted to the U-groups. Research by Plank on the texts associated with many outlying elite groups further encourages us to see them not as loci of sub- or non-royal power but as expressions of royal (dynastic) control and planning instigated by Yax Pasaj and employing templates created by Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil. Plank (2003, 2004) focuses on Late Classic Copan structures that share the emic characterization *otoot*, or "dwelling," found in architectural texts at Copan and elsewhere. For example, in the Las Sepulturas zone, structures 9M-146 and 9N-82 (the Scribe House), east of the Principal Group, share the following:

1. Identical structure plans consisting of a central bench chamber flanked by mirror-image side chambers
2. Identical emic designations (the *otoot*, or dwelling, of non-royal nobles)
3. Dedication dates within 100 days of each other
4. Benches that share iconographic themes, namely the Starry Deer Caiman and the world-sustaining bakabs
5. Structures that were inserted into previously existing structures in the AD mid-770s without apparent regard for the previous configuration or function of the group

Plank suggests that, in the outlying urban architectural complexes, the ruler was engaged in the replication of the ceremonial precinct of the north end of the East Court of the Acropolis, dominated by Str. 22, the *otoot* dwelling of Ruler 13, Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil (Ahlfeldt 2004; see figure 6.3). This replication includes the distinctive Str. 22 building plan, which consists of a central chamber with nearly two identical flanking chambers (figure 6.5). She argues that the elite situation at the beginning of Yax Pasaj's reign, rather than being

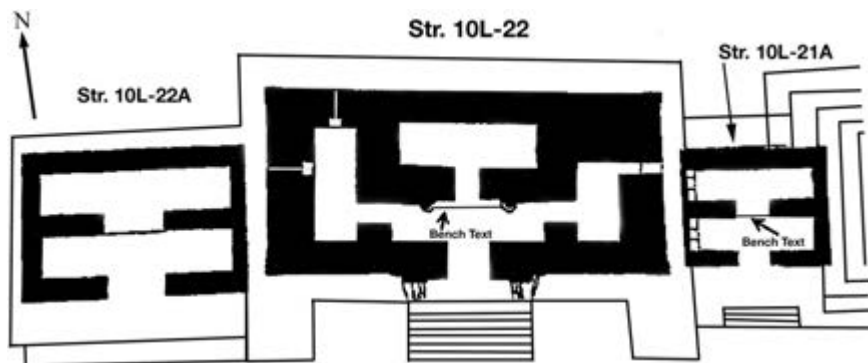


FIGURE 6.5. *Str. 22 on the Acropolis, with adjacent structures (modified after Plank 2003).*

one of wealthy competing lineages, was one of comparative material impoverishment and perhaps even architectural inactivity. In short, she concludes that the shared characteristics, including a standardized and highly formal plan of these buildings, as well as their chronological placement, indicate that they were part of a purposeful and centrally directed construction project during the reign of Yax Pasaj.

GROUP 11K-6, THE BOSQUE

Conservation goals, especially the recording and consolidation of heavily looted mounds, were fundamental to the PAPAC effort at Gr. 11K-6 and were pursued in tandem with surveying and excavations. Before 2005 little was known regarding the settlement history of the Bosque zone (but see Hall and Viel 2004 on the Bosque's Preclassic deposits). As part of the national park, the Bosque is heavily forested and therefore difficult to survey and excavate. Also, research priorities across many decades favored the Principal Group and Las Sepulturas over settlement to the west and in the foothills (Maca 2002).

Fash (1983b) reports the excavation of a single test pit in the Bosque, in the center of Plaza A at Gr. 11K-6, which yielded evidence of sparse settlement until the Late Classic period. We now know, however, that this test pit provided a limited view of the site's stratigraphic history, in part because of substantial alluvial activity in the Bosque over hundreds of years, as documented by Hall and Viel (2004). The University of Queensland's Copan Formative Project conducted extensive excavations in the Bosque from 1995 to 1997, to the south and west of Gr. 11K-6, near Ballcourt B. Perhaps the most path-breaking discovery of the Formative Project is that between about 1000 BC

and AD 500 the river margin that surrounds the Principal Group—including the Bosque—was subject to extensive periodic and seasonal inundations tied to the aggradation (sediment depositions) and lateral movements of the Copan River channel (ibid.:19). This means that in many cases the integrity of pre-AD 500 settlement was compromised or destroyed by alluviation and that any settlement in the river margins, including the Acropolis, had to consider and plan for often extreme river and sediment action. This also means that pre-AD 500 settlement in the Bosque would have been sparse and/or temporary. Hall and Viel (ibid.) suggest that a shift in drainage and land use in the Bosque *after* AD 500 was closely tied to urbanization, a point taken up in more depth below.

PAPAC EXCAVATIONS

At Gr. 11K-6, PAPAC's research goal was to understand the history and growth of the site by anchoring architectural and plaza stratigraphies into Copan's chronological framework and the growth of the city as a whole. We excavated test pits as well as broad plaza exposures and trenches through smaller mounds in Plaza B. Dating tools included ceramics (based mainly on the seriation put forth by Bill 1997), architectural styles and materials, and AMS applied to carbon and bone.

During the initial stage of excavations, PAPAC was immediately able to confirm and expand upon the research conclusions of the University of Queensland. The Classic period architectural history at Gr. 11K-6 consists of three major phases, ending with the reign of Yax Pasaj and beginning with the reign of the eleventh Ruler, Butz' Chan, AD 578–628. In deposits dating before the sixth century AD we found no evidence of monumental or even minor cut-stone structures or platforms. Rather, beneath all the Classic period settlement PAPAC documented in the Bosque sits meters of alluvial silt extending back in time through the Preclassic or Formative period into deep sterile alluvial deposits.

The only pre-sixth-century cultural deposits PAPAC uncovered were sparsely distributed platforms made of river cobbles and associated with Late Preclassic Chabij phase ceramics (ca. 100 BC–AD 50). These platforms were buried by later river silt and appear to have been islands amid extensive alluvial sedimentation. Before the sixth century it is clear that the river margin west of the Principal Group was not hospitable to settlement because of unpredictable inundations. From at least the Late Preclassic period until well into the Early Classic period, the only viable occupations in this area were islands of

marsh settlements that, based on the ceramics, may have been culturally Maya (for related discussions, see Hall and Viel 2004:26; Sharer et al. 1999:5). The larger and more dramatic story, however, is tied to the novel settlement events occurring in this zone *after* AD 500.

TOMB 68-1 AND URBANIZATION AT COPAN

The most heavily damaged structure at Gr. 11K-6 was Str. 28 on the west side of Plaza A, in the open end of the U-group (compare to Str. 4 of the Great Plaza and Str. 80 of the Gr. 9N-8 Scribe House complex). Modern looting of cut blocks had destabilized the entire west side of the substructure, and apparent opportunistic looting activity left a large and profound divot on the top of the mound, through the divot. Understanding that—because of the need for consolidation—a standard approach to the mound’s architectural stratigraphy would be difficult, PAPAC undertook small probes through the remains of the top of the substructure. One of these, a simple 1 x 1 meter test pit, was placed in the center of the mound. Just centimeters beneath the surface, the probe (subsequently expanded) exposed three sides of a cut-stone chute with evidence of stucco. The divot was not the result of modern looting but of ancestor veneration during the Classic period. The excavation of the chute consisted of the removal of a coarse intentional fill of small rocks and dirt. Approximately 2 meters below the surface we discovered that the chute had an outset lip or step, and a meter below this step was an approximately 1-m-long ashlar capstone. Before removing the capstone, we built a protective structure over the mound to control contamination and began extensive excavations in the area immediately north of the chute to better understand the character and context of the entire structure.

We discovered that the original phase of the mound was constructed in tandem with the chute and tomb structure (figure 6.6). The interior of the mound was carefully fortified with concentric rings of retention walls as well as several unitary walls made of river cobbles and rustic chunks of tuff. The most impressive interior wall was built east to west to assist in retaining a 3-m-high cluster of stones and cut monoliths placed as a load on what we later discovered to be the northern vault of a subterranean tomb. Once the capstone was lifted, it was apparent that it sealed a tomb entrance that passes directly *through* the southern vault: this created an unusual “split-vault” that allowed for construction of an upper staging platform inside the vault, a design never before documented in Maya archaeology (figure 6.7).

Two meters below the stuccoed staging platform was the floor of the tomb. Corner niches of the tomb, designated Tomb 68-1, contained offerings.

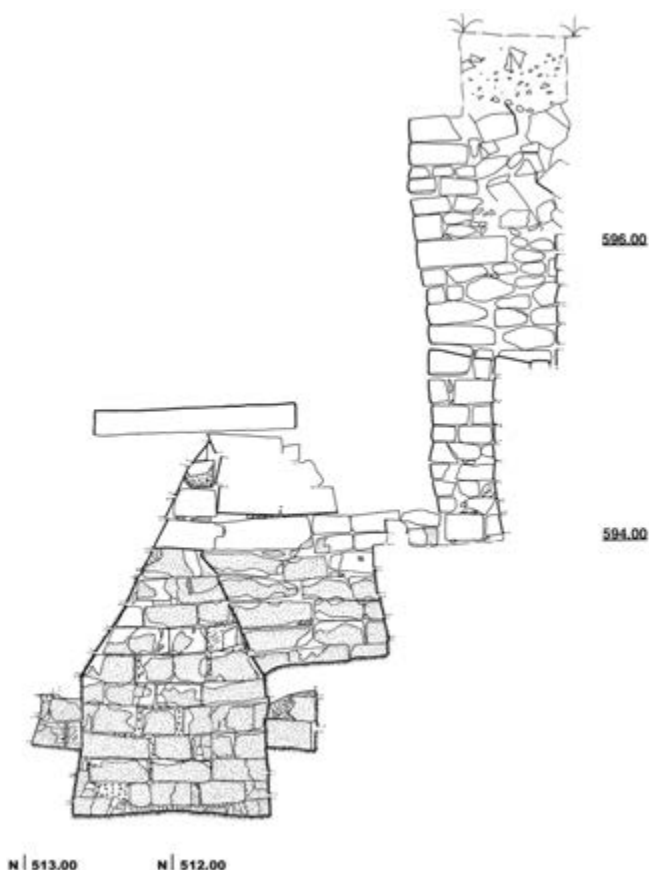


FIGURE 6.6. Section drawing of Tomb 68-1, including the access chute, within Str. 11K-28 (drawn by Gregorio Perez/PAPAC).

Beneath more than a meter of the debris from the collapse of the tomb's west wall we found a well-preserved individual and a number of unusual artifacts, discussed in the following section. The dating of the interment is significant: two different ribs provided AMS dates of AD 580 and AD 610. These dates are supported by the mound fill ceramics, which are Early Classic Acbi phase and early seventh-century Acbi-Coner transition phase—labeled “Bico” by Maca (2002). These phases predate AD 650 (Bill 1997, 2014). It seems reasonable to estimate that the main construction of Tomb 68-1 occurred during the transition between Acbi and Bico, hence the neat alignment with the AMS dates.

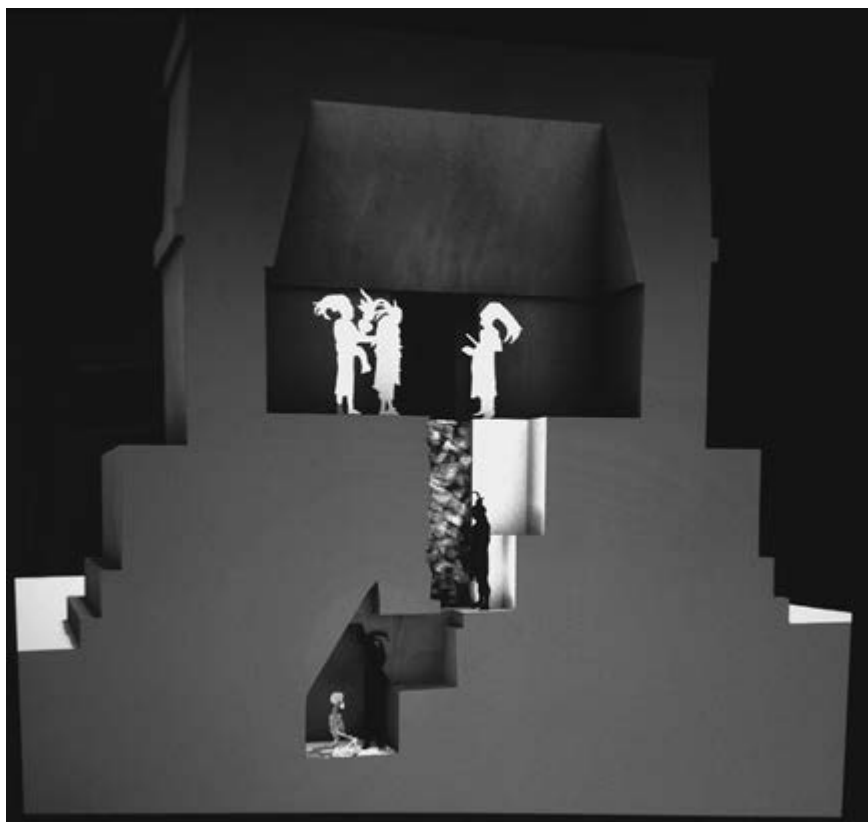


FIGURE 6.7. *Digital reconstruction of Str. 11K-28 and Tomb 68-1, with access chute highlighted as well (drawn by Clement Valle/PAPAC).*

The most significant contextual evidence for this funerary monument is that it appeared essentially *ex novo* or *ex nihilo*. The structure has no precedent and the tomb is cut directly into several meters of pre-sixth century—and sterile—river sediment. It is the earliest Classic period building yet found in this sector of the Bosque and is likely associated with a settlement- or population-founding event sometime in the sixth century. Hall and Viel (2004) present solid evidence for artificial canals used to mitigate flooding during the Preclassic and Proto-Classic periods. Karla Davis-Salazar (2006) discusses myriad local and urban strategies used to contain, divert, and conduct water during the late Classic period. The evidence from the PAPAC excavations suggests that in the Early Classic period (i.e., sixth century) there occurred a much larger-scale

intervention to more or less permanently drain and in-fill the Bosque zone to make it more hospitable for monumental and long-term settlement, as well as an increasing population: a “classic” land reclamation. While much additional research remains to be done in the Bosque, PAPAC results indicate that the Str. 28 tomb is linked to the first and perhaps main phase of urbanization at Classic period Copan. Provided such a scenario, the pressing questions are who was interred in Tomb 68-1 and what does the burial context tell us about the individual’s origins and culture?

FOREIGN MIGRATION AND THE SKELETAL EVIDENCE

The unusual design of the tomb is only one of many distinctive or unique features of this tomb context. Numerous details yielded from analyses of the bones and burial artifacts, for example, are puzzling and unprecedented at Copan. The bioarchaeological study was undertaken by Katherine Miller of Indiana University (Maca and Miller 2009). The preservation of the human skeletal material was remarkable because of the relatively basic pH of the soil that buried the individual after the collapse of the tomb’s west “plug” wall. The most striking result of Miller’s research that relates to urbanization is the strontium signature (0.7075) of the individual, as derived from a first molar (Miller 2015): the Tomb 68-1 individual was clearly a foreign-born or non-local person, possibly from the area around the Pasión River in the Guatemalan Petén (see Price et al. 2010). The only other possible strontium match for a Mesoamerican origin place of this individual is the area around Monte Alban and San José Mogote. The Petén seems more likely but is far from certain. It is possible that the individual hails from a region that has not yet had a strontium baseline established for it, which leaves enormous areas of Honduras (Miller and Freiwald 2013). In any event, the individual was born outside the Copan Valley, a point that is elaborated below.

The individual was male and aged approximately fifty years, but it is surprising that he did not die much earlier because of the numerous pathologies Miller detected in the skeleton. For example, the left arm assemblage had a misshapen scapula and a healed over scar in the humeral head where an infection burst through. The skull shows distinct signs of mastoiditis, an inflammation of the skull that can be fatal. In addition, many of the cervical vertebrae were malformed and/or had closed arterial foramina.

Another feature of the skeleton that is highly unique, and which would seem to confirm the non-local traits evident in the tomb design and the strontium, is the dental modification. The teeth present patterns of modification that are not



FIGURE 6.8. *Skeletal remains of individual from Tomb 68-1, after excavation of torso. Note placement of cranium and that legs were completely crossed in the “tailor” position (photographed by Allan Maca/PAPAC).*

standard in the Classic Maya repertoire (e.g., the Tomb 68-1 individual displays combined jade and pyrite inlays, inlays on premolars, and horizontal incising).

The most unique physical characteristic of the skeleton, however, was its burial position: upright and cross-legged, also known as the “tailor” position, and oriented to the south (figure 6.8). Burials in the “tailor” position are exceedingly rare in Mesoamerica, and those that are documented tend to be elite, are associated with Teotihuacan, and date to the Early Classic period (Cowgill 2003:320; 2015:87–88; Smyth and Rogart 2004; Spence and Pereira 2007): three are known from the Moon Pyramid at Teotihuacan, two from Kaminaljuyu, several from Chac II in Yucatan’s Puuc region, one from El Mirador, and two from the Principal Group at Copan (Valdes and Wright 2004:353), including the famed Motmot burial. The individual’s skull in Tomb 68-1 had apparently been arranged and set up to the south of the body post-mortem—facing it—and cinnabar applied, as traces of the red mineral were found on the brow. The removal of the skull and the traces of cinnabar likely



FIGURE 6.9. *Rollout of cylindrical polychrome vessel on floor of Tomb 68-1 (drawn by Elvin Arias/PAPAC).*

indicate tomb re-entry many years or decades after the original interment, a point taken up in more depth below.

TOMB 68-1 ARTIFACTS

The cultural materials from Tomb 68-1 are unusual and, with exception of the jade pectoral, are of types unknown at Copan. Two matching sets of ceramics vessels were found in the tomb, one set in the corner niches and one set on the tomb floor. The vessels in the niches, four in total, are small, red painted cups and are almost precisely the same. One cup was found in or associated with each niche. Around the exterior rims of the cups are a series of largely unintelligible (“pseudo”) glyphs, though one of these is a true hieroglyphic reference in the ancient Maya corpus: the glyph for a building dedication. On the floor of the tomb were three kindred polychrome vessels, painted in black and red: two composite bowls and one much larger cylindrical bowl. Each of the three pots displays similar styles and motifs as well as bands of “false glyphs” around its exterior rim. The large cylindrical vessel is remarkable for its florid painting of a regal figure facing a serpent that births the head of the maize god (figure 6.9). Perhaps the most important feature of all of these ceramic vessels is that their styles are currently unknown. Several leading ceramicists remain puzzled as to the precise geographic origins of the pots. Rosemary Joyce (personal communication, 2005) believes the three polychrome vessels represent a stylistic cross-section of traits found among four types of Mesoamerican ceramic traditions: Copador, Ulua Polychrome, Arambala, and the Kankin phase polychromes from Belize—in other words, a broad mix of southeastern Mesoamerican styles with one from northern Belize. Most intriguing with respect to these ceramic

traditions is that they do not begin until the mid-seventh century. Assuming for now that the Tomb 68-1 vessels are chronologically aligned with some or all of these traditions, we must be seeing an example of what the tomb was clearly designed for, namely, re-entry and subsequent ancestor veneration.

Several dozen jade beads were found associated with a large jade pectoral. The pectoral is a rare type at Copan, called a “string-line” pectoral (Maca 2002). There is no carving on this type of pectoral; rather, a horizontal section has been neatly cut out of the front to reveal the color or form of string used to hang the pectoral from the neck. Only three other “string-line” pectorals have been found at Copan, each made of jade and associated with a burial context within or adjacent to the other outlying U-groups discussed above. Carved and painted shell earspools were also discovered, as were three *Spondylus* shells laid out in a partial cosmogram (i.e., quincunx). One *Spondylus* shell was set between the individual’s crossed legs, and two others (their spines removed) were set immediately south of the individual’s knees: one in the southeast and one in the southwest.

DISCUSSION: POLITY DYNAMICS AT COPAN

The micro and the macro contexts of Tomb 68-1 provide numerous novel vantage points for deducing polity dynamics at two vital moments in Copan’s history: the Early Classic to Late Classic transition (ca. AD 550–650) prior to Copan’s apogee and spanning the reigns of the eleventh and twelfth kings (Butz’ Chan and K’ahk’ Uti’ Witz’ K’awiil); and the *late* Late Classic period immediately prior to Copan’s collapse (at about AD 775, during the reign of Yax Pasaj). Fash (see, e.g., Fash 2001:101–14; Fash et al. 2004) documents the extraordinary artistic and architectural achievements at Copan during the reigns of the twelfth and thirteenth rulers, from about AD 628 to the AD 738 death of Waxaklahun Ubah K’awiil. Based on her studies of Copan ceramic assemblages, Cassandra Bill segments Copan’s apogee into approximately the same period, which she calls the Early Coner ceramic subphase, between AD 650 and 750. She notes that this is a time of “both consolidation and territorial expansion” during which the “vibrancy of the Copan polity . . . is mirrored in the vitality of the pottery-making industry at this time, which marks the peak of ceramic diversity at Copan” (Bill 2014:135–36). The unusual polychrome vessels most likely date to this period and attest to the wide array of cultural influences present within the Copan polity at this time.

Prior to AD 650, the Copan polity, though well established, was still negotiating its place within the greater lowland Maya interaction sphere of the

Classic period. Given that Copan's base population most likely consisted of substantial numbers of people who were culturally Lenca (Manahan and Canuto 2009; see also Maca 2009), the evolution of Copan's polity would have been a complex and protracted phenomenon expressing many facets and features regionally and locally (Canuto and Bell 2008). Based on the data presented in this chapter, I propose that true urbanization and population growth did not occur at Copan until the mid- to late sixth century. This was possible because the land reclamation scheme made the Bosque zone broadly habitable for the first time in history. The land reclamation itself may have been fueled by rising population and/or inflows of migrants—or possibly by far-reaching geopolitical events in Mesoamerica. To what extent the urbanization at this time was linked to full-blown polity formation is a question worth examining in future and ongoing studies. For reasons explained below, there was likely a close correlation between the two.

Hall and Viel (2004) propose that some water-management features dating to the Early Classic period, like massive diversion walls along the Acropolis, were built with dynastic mandate. Davis-Salazar (2006) suggests the existence of similar centralized efforts during the Late Classic period. However, she also notes that the quality and characteristics of water-management features varied between the residential zones of Las Sepulturas and the Bosque, which may indicate more localized controls at certain times or for certain features. In light of the scale of intervention undertaken across the Bosque in the sixth century—consisting of both drainage and in-filling/leveling—it seems most parsimonious to conclude that this reclamation scheme required significant dynastic sanction and orchestration: sanction because of what appears to have been the integration of at least one prominent foreign cultural component, and orchestration because the implications of the land reclamation extend to considerable population growth and settlement in the Bosque zone and thus significant urbanization. Intensified settlement of the northern foothills of Copan also occurred at about this point in time, albeit with a less apparent elite component and fewer documented interventions related to water management (Maca 2002).

The issue of foreign settlement within, and influence on the development of, Copan's polity continues as a major theme in research on Copan at the urban and regional scales, with a particular emphasis now on the Lenca as a base population and the Maya as likely foreigners, although well-entrenched foreigners (Canuto and Bell 2008, 2013; Manahan and Canuto 2009). The pivotal research of the late Robert Sharer (see, e.g., Sharer 2003, 2004, 2009) establishes critical baselines for understanding the role of other non-local

“foreigners” in Early Classic Copan, especially linked to Teotihuacan and Tikal. In line with Sharer, David Stuart (2000, 2007) has brought his research to bear on Copan’s texts to inform our understanding of polity dynamics and dynastic history, including the dynastic founding. Both Sharer and Stuart fundamentally agree with Marcus (2004; see also Marcus 1976) that the case of (Early Classic) Copan is one of secondary state formation. They concur that the externalist model (*sensu* Braswell 2003) of the polity’s founding is most correct; namely, that Teotihuacan set up the dynasty of Copan founder Yax K’uk’ Mo’ via powerful emissaries in the Petén (and at Caracol [Stuart 2007]). Fash (2001; Fash and Fash 2000; Fash et al. 2004) is clear as well in demonstrating the vital influence of Teotihuacan at Copan from earliest times (i.e., the Motmot burial), including the Late Classic period obsession with the Teotihuacan-linked first ruler, K’inich Yax K’uk’ Mo’.

Arguably because of Copan’s place on the southeastern periphery of the Classic Maya zone, at a cultural ecotone between Mesoamerica and the so-called Intermediate Area, as well as because of its resources and trade routes, Copan has had a major “foreign” role in its polity since its inception. We might elaborate this point to highlight that to a large degree Copan was fundamentally multi-cultural and was probably dependent on multiple ethnic groups in the formation and consolidation of its polity—something that makes the case of Copan rather unique in Maya archaeology. What has been elusive at Copan is an understanding of the extent to which non-local people—and multi-ethnic influences—continued to settle and shape Copan well into the sixth century and beyond. Tomb 68-1 provides solid evidence that a foreign or non-local influence was prominent during the sixth-century process of urbanization. This influence also may have served as a sociopolitical anchor in the formation and stabilization of Copan’s polity leading up to its seventh-century florescence. The fact that at the close of the sixth century we find evidence of a monumental tomb with a distinctive Teotihuacan-type burial position further elaborates the ideological and material links between Copan and distant regions well beyond its fifth-century founding events.

To emphasize this last point, it is worth noting that Tomb 68-1 may have been linked to dramatic mid-sixth-century events at Copan that Sharer (2004) argues were tied to the geopolitics of the Maya lowlands. He notes two intriguing phenomena related to monument dedications at Copan: (1) from AD 554 to 564 there is a hiatus in dedications; and (2) nineteen of twenty-three monuments dating from AD 435 to 554 are smashed and incomplete, while twenty-six stelae dating after AD 564 are complete (ibid.:305–10). Sharer believes that these are related phenomena—that all of the monument

destructions occurred at once sometime during the hiatus and that they were influenced directly or indirectly by the conflict between Tikal and Calakmul that occurred between AD 556 and 562. A new Copan king, Moon Jaguar, came to power in AD 553. Sharer posits that at an early or middle point in Moon Jaguar's twenty-five-year reign, Calakmul broke open Tikal's alliance with Copan and influenced specific and wide-ranging destructive events in Copan. These events most notably targeted monuments dedicated since the founding of the Classic period dynasty (including at least one of Moon Jaguar's own stelae) and created a gap in dedications until Moon Jaguar re-established himself and his legacy in AD 564.

Sharer (ibid.:316) explicitly argues that these phenomena are tied to external or foreign (non-local) influences, namely, an outside incursion from Calakmul. Is it possible that the land reclamation, urbanization, and foreign settlement of the Bosque are tied to these events as well? The main construction of the funerary monument centered on Tomb 68-1 dates to sometime between the late sixth and early seventh centuries. It marks the death of the noble non-local individual interred therein. His arrival and the draining of the Bosque, however, obviously occurred considerably earlier. It is certainly conceivable that the foreign political disruption Sharer ponders was in some fashion correlated with the complex foreign presence we document at Tomb 68-1. This presence was important enough not only to have warranted a rare and extraordinary tomb *designed* for ancestor veneration but also to have had such veneration *carried out* in distinctive ways many decades after the initial interment.

Turning now to the Late Classic period and the lead-up to the collapse, with respect to Copan's links to external cultures and influences, Bill (2014:142) notes that at "the end of the Late Classic period, such far-reaching connections became sharply attenuated." This is explained by her statement that "[t]wo of the most notable developments within the ceramic inventory of this period are marked decreases in both the frequency and the diversity of fine wares, suggesting that fine-ware production in general fell off during the late dynastic period" (ibid.:139).

Plank's (2004) research on Copan's outlying wards during this period agrees with a scenario involving a decline in resources with respect, for example, to architectural activity and the resources put toward elite construction. She sees this period as an expression of a relatively impoverished elite base. As discussed above, Plank argues that Yax Pasaj borrowed the cultural currency of his esteemed predecessor, Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil, to extend, validate, and strengthen his power within the polity during a wane in Copan's fortune. One facet of this currency was discovered at Gr. 11K-6, where the dominant

structure of the U-group, Str. 11K-30, directly east across Plaza A from Str. 11K-28 and Tomb 68-1, bears the signature room template of Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil's throne building, Str. 10L-22.

Maca, too, argues for an intimately related program of reference and memory on the part of Yax Pasaj: that he borrowed the central place (U-group) architectural design of Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil's Great Plaza and imposed it on outlying wards. This was done to extend control and also to legitimize his power by use of both a reference to a famed sacred ancestor and a standard social and cosmological paradigm for unifying space, politics, and people (i.e., the quincunx). It is certainly significant that the eighth-century U-groups imposed by Yax Pasaj are each built on, near, or adjacent to elite sixth- and seventh-century burials that contain the unusual string-line jade pectorals. This suggests that his selection of the U-group sites was not random but that his urban model may have been built upon an even more elaborate preexisting template. In considering long-term systems of reference, legitimacy, and memory, it is also worth noting that the Late Classic U-groups of Copan have an architectural ancestor in the grand U-group that frames the Temple of Quetzalcoatl and Ciudadela at Teotihuacan.

Throughout the Early Classic period at Copan, the distant empire of Teotihuacan played an active role in material exchange and memory. Even well in to the Late Classic period, until the fall of the dynasty, Teotihuacan and the goggle-eyed Tlaloc warrior and founder K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo had great weight in the polity orientation and social memory of Copan. Subsequent to the death of Waxaklahun Ubah K'awiil it would appear that *his* memory and power served in the attempted revitalization of the polity by Yax Pasaj. The likelihood that Yax Pasaj possessed a Palenque-based matriline means that he may have been endowed with the legitimacy and resources to carry out this revival and to prop up the cohesion of his ailing polity. PAPAC research at Gr. 11K-6 and Tomb 68-1 will continue, and it is hoped that this chapter will encourage future research into the Bosque zone and an important moment of urbanization in the history of the Copan polity.

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*La Sufricaya**A Place in Classic Maya Politics*ALEXANDRE TOKOVININE AND
FRANCISCO ESTRADA-BELLI**INTRODUCING LA SUFRICAYA**

With hieroglyphic writing deciphered, students of the ancient Maya civilization are privileged with access to the pre-Columbian landscape through the words of its creators and inhabitants. Places and histories, people and events that shaped the Classic Maya world are now known and can be contrasted to the material remains of the distant past discovered by archaeologists. It is even possible, at least in theory, to establish links and causal relationships between the two landscapes, the one of history and the one of archaeological investigation. In practice, however, not every story was carved in stone and not every physical expression of the rich fabric of Classic Maya social, economic, and political life withstood the test of the tropical climate. The temporal and material scales of history and archaeology are vastly different. Battles, conquests, and the web of intrigue at the royal courts left few or no material traces. The vast majority of the Classic Maya society never contributed to the written record. The narratives produced by Maya epigraphers and archaeologists are not, therefore, two sides or facets of the same story. More often than not, they are different tales that cannot be reconciled.

This chapter explores a set of archaeological and textual data that perhaps makes such an encounter possible. The place is a cluster of buildings and platforms on a ridge above the swampy basin of the Holmul River in the northeastern part of the Department of

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FIGURE 7.1. *Holmul and major Classic Maya sites in the southern lowlands (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

Petén, Guatemala, just a few dozen miles from the border with Belize (figure 7.1). Today, this place is called La Sufricaya. Found by *chicleros* and put on the map by Ian Graham, like many other archaeological sites in the region, it owes the name to a grove of Sufricaya trees, good hardwood. The story is the Early Classic *entrada*, or the “arrival of strangers” in the Maya lowlands, as it was called by some art historians and epigraphers. The archaeological and textual narratives overlap so closely at La Sufricaya that the emergence, brief existence, and demise of a palace complex may be linked directly to the regional political history. Moreover, such strong correspondence makes it possible to address important questions about the function of the Classic Maya built environment with respect to the success or failure of political institutions, particularly at the local level. It also raises an important issue of memory and its materialization in the ancient Maya political centers.

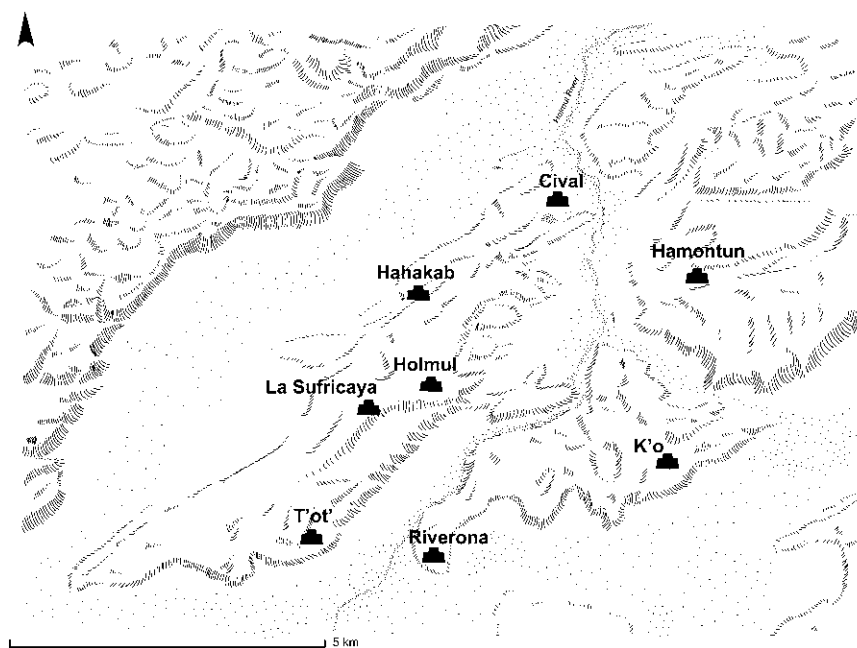


FIGURE 7.2. *La Sufricaya and its neighbors in the Holmul region (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

PLACE

As mentioned, La Sufricaya occupies the top of a low ridge with a commanding view of the Holmul River floodplain (figure 7.2). The river is 2 km away. There is no flowing water in the river during the dry season. With no perennial lake (*aguada*) nearby, the inhabitants of La Sufricaya would have to walk a few miles to the nearest pool of water in the dried riverbed or rely on *chultun*, or underground cisterns (nine have been discovered so far). A larger artificial reservoir may have existed but has not yet been identified. Judging from the uniform angle of the plazas, it was probably placed northwest of the site core. This fact implies that the location of La Sufricaya was initially chosen because of some considerations other than practicalities of year-round water supply. Visibility might have been one of these factors: if the area were less forested, the top structures at La Sufricaya, as the highest point on the landscape within a 5-km radius, would be visible from afar and would allow the occupants to see everything going on in this section of the Holmul River basin.

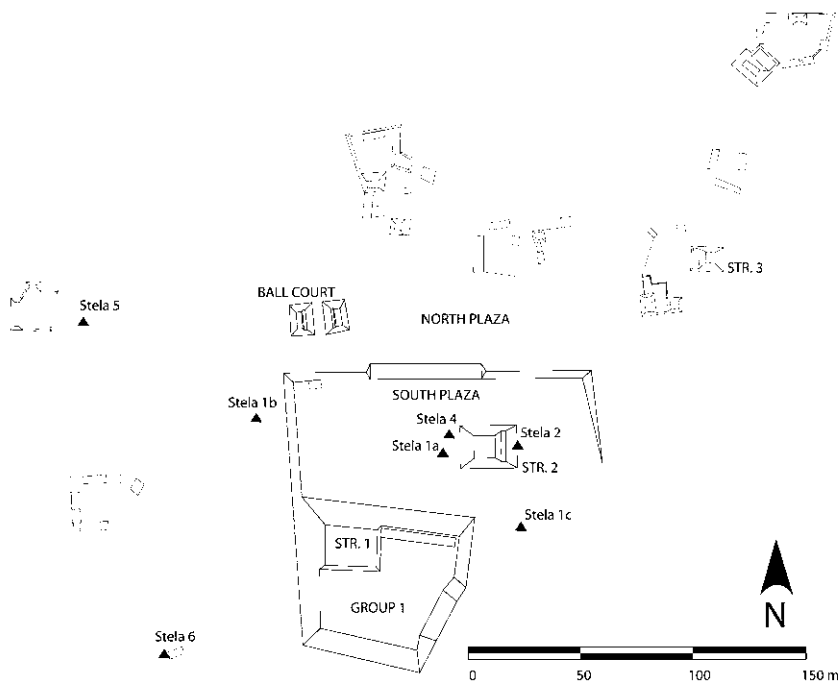


FIGURE 7.3. *Monumental core of La Sufricaya (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

The monumental core of La Sufricaya is made up of two leveled spaces: the South Plaza is raised 3 m above the North Plaza (figure 7.3). The two areas are connected by a broad stairway. The South Plaza is dominated by Group 1, an 11-m-tall platform in its southwest corner. Several buildings interspersed with courtyards once occupied the top of Group 1, with Structure 1 the largest mound today. A stairway would lead visitors from the plaza floor to the southern edge of Group 1 (discussed later). In addition to Group 1, a temple mound (Structure 2) towers in the center of the South Plaza, and the remains of at least one low platform were discovered on the northwest edge. The North Plaza features a ball court on its west side and another temple (Structure 3) in the northeast corner. At least nineteen residential groups cluster to the north and west of the site core.

Human occupation at La Sufricaya likely began during the Middle Preclassic period. Mixed Late Preclassic (Itzamkanak-Chicanel complex)–Terminal Preclassic (Wayaab-Sub complex) pottery and very small amounts of Middle Preclassic ceramics (Ixim–Late Eb complex and Yax Te–Mamom

complex) were found in the construction fill of the plazas and Group 1 (Callaghan 2008:10–11, 272, 305, 320–55). Any Middle or Late Preclassic structures or primary deposits remain to be discovered. In addition to Late to Terminal Preclassic material, the construction fill of monumental buildings at La Sufricaya contains ceramics pertaining to the Early Classic Tzakol 1–2 complex, while the termination fill of Structure 1 corresponds to the Tzakol 3 complex and the Late and Terminal Early Classic period (Callaghan 2006, 2008:361–421; Tomasic and Estrada Belli 2003). In contrast, only one of nineteen residential groups proved to have structures with Early Classic construction phases (Foley 2005, 2007). The bulk of the visible residential area around the site core appears to represent the Late Classic and Terminal Classic occupation, although this picture may change with further research (Estrada Belli 2001; Tomasic and Estrada Belli 2003).

La Sufricaya is located just a kilometer from the core of the much larger archaeological site of Holmul, which has extensive Preclassic and Late Classic occupation (Estrada Belli 2002). In fact, such is the expanse of the Late Classic and Terminal Classic Holmul that one can confidently place La Sufricaya within it. As was pointed out in earlier publications (Estrada Belli et al. 2009, 2011), however, La Sufricaya does not readily fit the definition of a secondary center or an architectural group within Holmul (as arbitrary as such distinctions may be). Both La Sufricaya and Holmul have elaborate elite residential buildings, plazas, and ball courts. Carved and inscribed stelae, which are often indicative of some form of political independence, were found only at La Sufricaya.

Moreover, the apparent peak of monumental construction at La Sufricaya corresponds to a period in the Holmul chronology that is not well understood. As pointed out by Callaghan (2008:78), despite the caveat of possible sampling biases between the two sites, it is potentially significant that La Sufricaya material dominates when it comes to the Early Classic ceramic complexes. Most of the Tzakol 1–3 ceramics at Holmul come from a single structure—the construction fill and burials in Building B of Group 2 (*ibid.*:135–65; Merwin and Vaillant 1932:20–41), and that sample is largely restricted to fine serving vessels. No corresponding elite residence was found in Group 2, although there is some evidence that the construction of some structures of the known Late Classic–Terminal Classic palace in Group 3 at Holmul may have started during the Early Classic period (Mongelluzzo 2011:127). It is hard to imagine rival political centers just 1 km from each other, so the archaeological data seem to suggest that the brief rise of La Sufricaya corresponded to a temporal shift of political authority from Holmul.

The investigation of the North and South Plazas at La Sufricaya found three Early Classic construction phases (Tokovinine 2006a, 2006b, 2008:305–22). During the first phase, the areas of the two plazas were leveled and elevated where necessary. Only plaza floors associated with that phase were found. The second stage saw the construction of Group 1 and Structures 1 and 2, although the latter could have been built later than the former. Some areas of the plazas were raised further, and the wide stairway between them was built. The third construction phase was marked by adding a ball court and re-plastering the plaza floors. There is no evidence that the ball court was ever modified. The only change to Structure 2 (figure 7.4) happened when an interment was placed in the room of the superstructure (unfortunately, the burial has been looted, and only a few vessels discarded by the modern grave robbers point to its chronological placement). Perhaps significant, the construction fill of the ball court and Structure 2 contains much greater quantities of Early Classic pottery than do the plaza floors and even some reused masonry, indicating that these buildings were added after the newly built monumental core had been occupied for some time. Several carved monuments found at La Sufricaya were probably once erected in the plazas, although their original location remains unknown. The floor of Group 1 was modified several times, and the complex of Structure 1 (figure 7.5) grew incrementally by adding and modifying buildings, connecting walls, and building stairways (Estrada Belli et al. 2006, 2009; Foley 2007; Tokovinine 2008:319–21; Tomasic and Estrada Belli 2003).

The end of the elite occupation at La Sufricaya was marked by a radical transformation of the monumental architecture. The room of Structure 2 was converted into a burial and sealed, not unlike the rooms of Building B at Holmul (Merwin and Vaillant 1932:20–41). It is possible that a broken stela fragment (Stela 2) was placed in the tomb fill (Grube 2003:702). Other carved monuments (Stelae 1, 5, and 6) were also broken and taken to different parts of the site (*ibid.*). In fact, approximately two-thirds of Stelae 2 and 6 have not yet been found. Part of the complex of buildings on the northwest corner of Group 1 was ritually terminated and fully or partially encased within the platform of Structure 1, while other buildings nearby were razed to the ground (Estrada Belli 2007:63–65, figure 49; Foley 2003, 2005; Hurst et al. 2008:356). No other large-scale modifications followed. During the Late and Terminal Classic periods, there is only limited evidence that the public spaces were in use (a plain stela and altar in front of Structure 2), and the area was gradually filled with new residential platforms. Standing Early Classic buildings were left in disrepair, used to extract construction materials or modified into modest residences, and partially covered by refuse deposits.

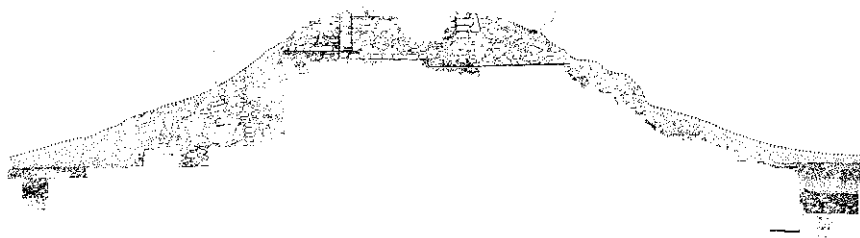


FIGURE 7.4. East-west profile of La Sufriçaya, Structure 2 (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).

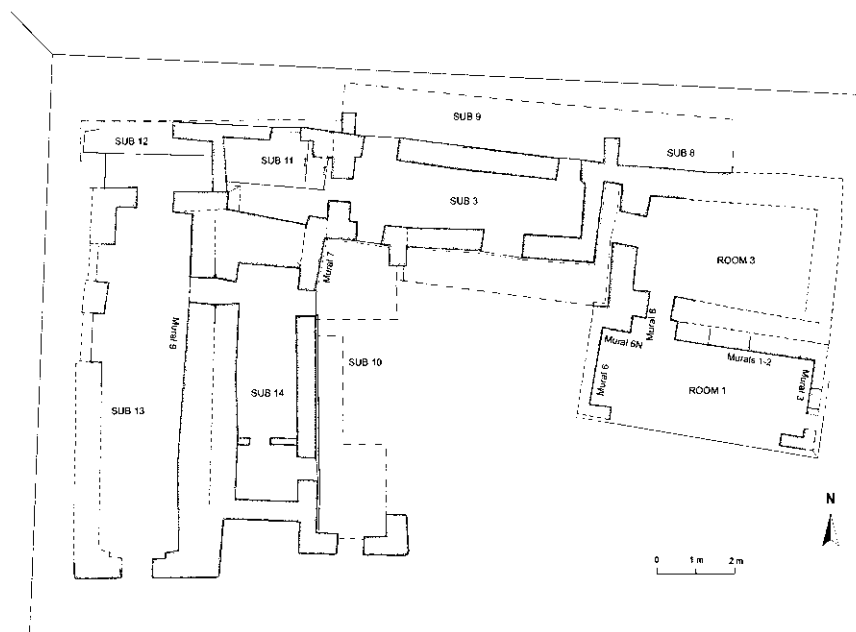


FIGURE 7.5. Plan of the first construction phase of Structure 1 (drawing by Jennifer M. Foley, with minor amendments by Alexandre Tokovinine).

It therefore appears that the configuration of La Sufriçaya as a built locale went through several major transformations: from few, perhaps perishable residences to a public civic-ceremonial center and back to an agglomeration of larger and more permanent residential groups incorporated into the greater

Holmul zone. These transformations were likely made following periods of complete or partial abandonment of the site. No deposits uncovered so far show continuous occupation through any one of these transitional periods.

HISTORY

Like many other Early Classic narratives, the story on inscribed monuments and murals at La Sufricaya begins with the arrival of Sihyaj K'ahk' at Tikal in 378 CE, a pivotal event in Classic Maya history that still causes controversy among Mayanists (Braswell 2003; Estrada Belli et al. 2009; Houston and Inomata 2009:106–8; Martin and Grube 2008:29–33; Stuart 2000). Despite their different perspectives on what actually happened, most scholars agree that some form of interaction with the great metropolis of Teotihuacan did occur. Several Classic Maya royal dynasties were founded or reestablished under the real or claimed auspices of “Western overlords” (*ochk'in kaloomte'*) or in the context of possible travels to and from Teotihuacan, in particular a location called Wite' Naah (Fash, Tokovinine, and Fash 2009). The transformations were marked by the adoption of selected elements of the foreign prestige culture, which were then reproduced years after cessation of contact with Teotihuacan.

Mural 7 in one of the buildings buried within Structure 1 at La Sufricaya (figure 7.6) reports that the complex was constructed (*pat-tuun*) just one year after Sihyaj K'ahk' arrived at Tikal (Estrada Belli et al. 2009). The surviving fragment of Stela 6, dated to about a decade after the arrival event, also mentions Sihyaj K'ahk' and possibly another individual, although the poor state of the carving makes these readings tentative (Grube 2003:703, figure 4). The only thing missing from a typical narrative of the period would be a local royal founder. This gap is filled by Stela 1 (figure 7.7a), which shows an appropriately regal figure holding a recognizable Jester God/Principal Bird Deity crown of Maya kings flanked by deity heads on the sides of the monument and supervised by a god or deified ancestor hovering above. The preservation of the carving is again poor, but the name in the headdress of the protagonist resembles the second name on Stela 6 (ibid.:figure 4). There is no date, yet the style and composition of the scene are so similar to those of Tikal Stela 31 (Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:figure 52) that the two monuments must be roughly contemporaneous. The 400-year completion event celebrated in the inscription on Tikal Stela 31 in 435 CE might be the perfect context for a new royal start at La Sufricaya if it were commemorated by Stela 1, although a 20-year cycle completion of 416 or 396 CE would also be auspicious. A highly



FIGURE 7.6. *La Sufricaya, Structure 1, Mural 7* (drawing by Heather Hurst).

eroded inscription on Stela 5 (figure 7.7b) mentions a seating event, perhaps an accession, in 422 CE (Grube 2003:702, figure 3a). The location of the event is specified as Huk Kab Nal, “Seven Lands,” which may refer to La Sufricaya itself or to a wider region including Holmul and nearby sites (see figure 7.2). Unfortunately, the only other place name on La Sufricaya monuments is a toponymic register on Stela 1, and it is too eroded to allow us to tell if it refers to Huk Kab Nal or something else. The name of the protagonist on Stela 5 begins with a common Early Classic *mam* honorific, but the rest is too damaged for the text to be clear.

There is an important twist to the La Sufricaya story: if there was a new local king when Mural 7 was painted, the inscription does not mention him. Instead, it gives dedication credits to an individual with a *chak tok wayaab* title. *Wayaab* officials are mentioned in the inscriptions of the Usumacinta River region as a category of non-royal ritual specialists (Beliaev 2004). Available epigraphic evidence discussed elsewhere indicates that the only other Eastern

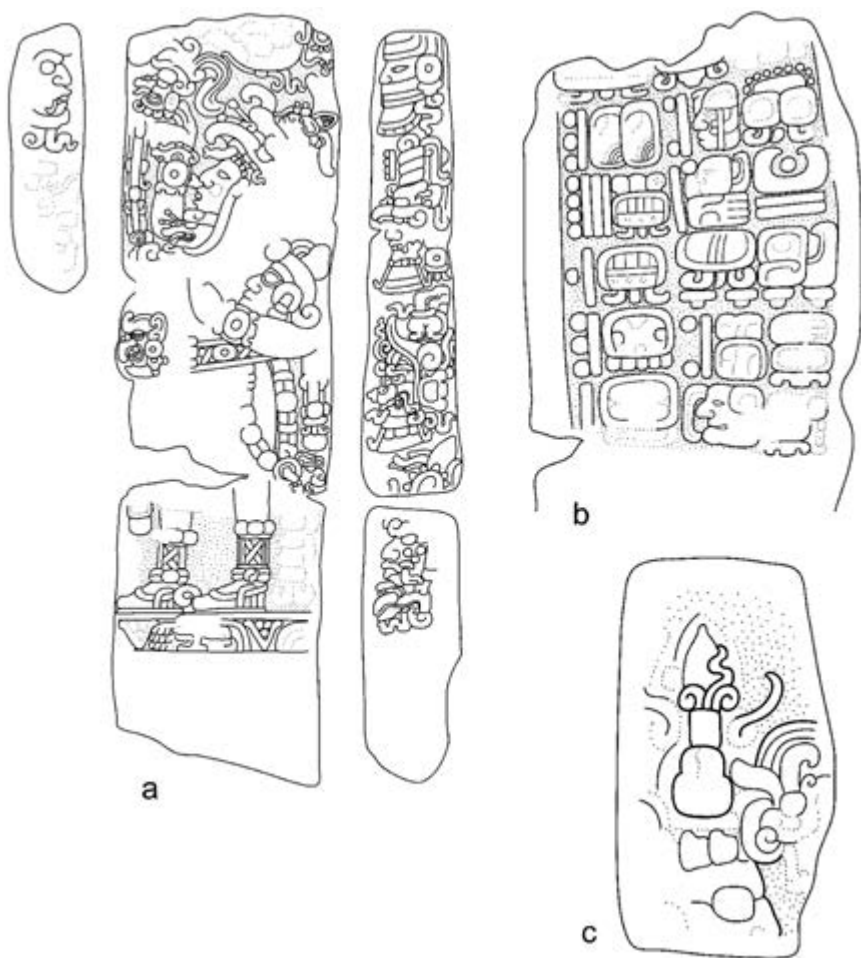


FIGURE 7.7. *La Sufricaya* monuments: (a) front and sides of Stela 1; (b) front of Stela 5; (c) left side of Stela 6 (drawings by Alexandre Tokovinine).

Peten site with chak tok wayaab individuals during the Classic Period is Holmul (Estrada Belli et al. 2009; Tokovinine 2006c). Therefore, two scenarios are likely: either somebody from the ruling family of Holmul moved to La Sufricaya and attempted to create a royal dynasty (claiming a new name and royal titles), or an emergent dynasty of non-local origin established itself at La Sufricaya and relied on at least some opportunistic members of the Holmul native elite who assisted in the construction. Neither scenario lacks precedent.

A roughly contemporaneous foundation of Copan's royal line shows a similar convergence of local and foreign interests (Stuart 2004, 2005, 2007).

The historical circumstances that led to the demise of La Sufricaya as a political center are more opaque. That said, several lines of evidence from the inscriptions at major royal courts at nearby sites, such as those of Tikal and Naranjo (Estrada Belli et al. 2009; Tokovinine and Fialko 2007), point to major shifts in regional political networks and balance of power. It looks as if the lords at La Sufricaya found themselves without the political capital and outside support of the rulers of Tikal or larger figures such as Sihyaj K'ahk', who might have been crucial for the foundation and maintenance of the new dynasty. La Sufricaya was probably not the only place in the region that was affected: for example, the small site of El Zapote south of Tikal experienced a synchronous boom and bust in the dedication of monuments with references to local rulers and their external patrons (Schele and Grube 1994:90). In the end, La Sufricaya was abandoned and Holmul was reestablished as a traditional place of authority untainted by political failure—a practice attested elsewhere in the Maya area (Child and Golden 2008). The recently discovered sixth-century ancestral shrine in Group 2 at Holmul, with public written statements of loyalty to the new overlords from Naranjo and Dzibanche, is a testament to that political shift (Than 2013).

MEMORIES

Stepping away from this broad historical canvas in which the lives of La Sufricaya Early Classic residents were clearly entwined, we can glimpse more about those who chose certain messages to be built into the texts, murals, plazas, stairs, and structures. We may never know the full underlying intent or the complete set of narratives La Sufricaya embodied. Some of them never took solid form, yet they existed as something to be performed and re-experienced by those who lived at and visited the site. Nevertheless, the selection and nature of memories evoked in the remaining representations inform us of how local rulers constructed their political identity at a new place. Here we borrow Connerton's (1989:72–73) distinction between the more unconscious process of bodily incorporation of social memory through habitual acts and the more selective and intentional practices of inscription when exosomatic memories are deposited in texts, imagery, and monumental architecture produced by certain individuals or groups to impose or (re)structure the collective memory. Both modes of remembering have become the subjects of increased scholarly attention among students of the Classic Maya (Gillespie 2010; Golden

2005, 2010; Joyce 2001, 2003; Joyce and Hendon 2000; LeCount 2010a, 2010b; O'Neil 2011; Stockett 2010). The methodology of the present study is similar to O'Neil's (2011) analysis of the placement and modification of royal monuments at the site of Yaxchilan. Yet the context of La Sufricaya also reminds one of the sculptural programs in the Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras hinterlands (Golden 2010) and of potential tensions between the narratives imposed from the regional centers and their royal dynasties and the inscribed memories of the subordinate secondary elites.

The discussion of La Sufricaya inscribed memories should begin with the all-glyphic Mural 7 (see figure 7.6; see also Estrada Belli et al. 2009:figure 7, table 1). This text offers the most important insight into the ways La Sufricaya elites saw themselves and their place in a larger political landscape. First, the inscription names the palatial complex as a "three-platform house." The term *naah* (house) is commonly used for palace complexes elsewhere and can be contrasted with the term *otoot* (dwelling), which usually refers to single structures (Plank 2004). Judging from the kinds of events happening at other *naah*, the notion of "house" encompasses not only rooms but also spaces used for dances and receptions. Therefore, a "three-platform house" could be the whole Group 1 complex or even the entire site. Apart from the possible meanings of this term, its main significance is that La Sufricaya enters narratives as a named location: it is designated as a place, and Mural 7 immediately contextualizes that new place. First, the text anchors the site in time by relating the dedication to the nearest *k'atun* completion. Then the narrative states that the palace was dedicated one year "since *K'awiil* [a way of referring to the lightning god and founding characters, including Sihyaj K'ahk'] arrived at *Mutal* [Tikal]," establishing a direct link between the foundation of La Sufricaya and that of the new political order at the greatest polity in the region.

These two themes—period ending and the new political order—are evoked over and over at La Sufricaya. It appears that none of the messages embedded in La Sufricaya buildings and monuments is purely self-referential. Instead, they continue to index the broader political and historical frameworks that brought La Sufricaya into existence. Murals 1–2, 3, and 6 in Structure 1, Room 1 (figure 7.8), depict rows of individuals recognizable as members of Maya nobility facing what look like steps occupied by seated Teotihuacan warriors (Estrada Belli 2003a:267, figure 6, 2003b; Foley 2005; Tomasic and Estrada Belli 2003:276). Mural 2 also shows larger figures seated on a mat above Teotihuacan warriors. The right-hand placement of the warriors and these larger figures in the composition of the painted scenes suggests the group's dominant position with respect to the lowland individuals (see Palka 2002



FIGURE 7.8. *La Sufricaya, Structure 1, Murals 1–2 (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

on left- and right-hand symbolism in Maya art). A depiction of Teotihuacan warriors as graffiti in Structure 1 Sub-13, which was scratched over an earlier Mural 9 (Estrada Belli et al. 2009:figure 6), adds a measure of immediacy to the planned and likely retrospective images in Room 1. More than anything else, this graffiti possibly gives a glimpse of the actual experience of the plazas of La Sufricaya being occupied by foreigners.

In addition, Mural 6 North in Room 1 presents a map-like scene with two temple or palace platforms connected by a road with footprints (Estrada Belli 2011:figure 6.13; Estrada Belli and Hurst 2011; Hurst 2009:figure 121; Tokovinine 2013:55). The temples and the road are arranged vertically, possibly indicating movement from west to east or vice versa, where east could be “up” and west could be “down.” This is in accordance with one of Mesoamerica’s representational conventions, also attested in Postclassic and Colonial Maya documents, although the east-west axis there may also be upside-down (Marcus 1992:153–89; Mundy 1998:203; Paxton 2004:116; Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:32; Roys 1973:125). Two groups of individuals meet in the middle of the road—a theme common to Postclassic pictorial maps illustrating migration histories in space and time. The upper temple in the scene features the larger figure of a lowland-dressed individual climbing the steps toward a character sitting on a throne and holding a wand with feathers. The figure in the lower (Western?) temple looks more like a deity, not dissimilar from some depictions of God K, K’awiil. Significant for the present discussion, a larger political landscape is evoked, adding a theme of pilgrimage to or migration from

important places located to the east or west. The residence of the first ruler of Copan, who famously made a long pilgrimage to Wite' Naah in the west, was also decorated with map-like Teotihuacan-style murals, although only small fragments have survived (Bell 2007:figure 5.14).

The trend of evoking a wider context continues on the stelae, which presumably celebrate period-ending events. However, as discussed, the focus of the messages on the monuments is not on the builder of Structure 1, who is mentioned on Mural 7. Stela 1 (see figure 7.7a) shows an individual in Early Classic Maya royal attire. He holds a crown in his right hand and possibly an effigy censer in his left. The central scene is flanked by witnessing lowland gods, including Chahk and G1/Sun God. It is highly unlikely that this individual is the *chak tok wayaab* of Mural 7. The composition of the scene and the presence of royal regalia suggest that the person depicted on Stela 1 is an *ajaw*. As mentioned, the title of *wayaab* is usually not assumed by people of the *ajaw* rank.

The sides of Stela 6 also depict deities. Since only the upper third of the monument has been found, it is impossible to know if there were two full figures or several floating heads, as on Stela 1. One of the two deities is Sun God with the *tajal wayaab* ("torch wayaab") epithet in the headdress (see figure 7.7c). In light of the *chak tok wayaab* title of local nobles, the evocation of this part of the sun deity's name is hardly accidental and may point to ritual/mythical parallels evoked in the relationship between the older Holmul-originated elites and the new power responsible for La Sufriçaya. Interestingly, one of G1's names is *yax wayaab* ("first wayaab") (Tokovinine 2006c). Unfortunately, that section of Stela 1 is damaged, and it is impossible to know if the *yax wayaab* name was placed in G1's headdress. Another mythical topos is evoked by Mural 9 in Structure 1 Sub-13 (Estrada Belli et al. 2009:234–35, figure 4). The scene on the mural seems to illustrate an episode in a set of narratives where various animals, including deer, hummingbird, and coati, receive important body parts (antlers, wings, tail) from the supreme celestial deity Itzam Kokaaj (God D) in exchange for gifts and services. If Stelae 1 and 6 represent a non-local dynasty at La Sufriçaya, these additional messages reveal the aspirations of local *wayaab* nobles. They are linked to the divine protectors of royalty. And they expect rewards for the service.

The inscription on Stela 5 (see Figure 7.7b) likely mentions one's accession in "Seven Lands (Places) in the skies, in the caves" (for an alternative interpretation of the clause, see Tokovinine 2013:99, figure 54a). As mentioned, Seven Lands might be a local toponym, but the number seven might also evoke the notion of Seven Divisions (*buk tzuk*), which is attested in Late Classic inscriptions

from several Central and Eastern Peten sites (Beliaev 2000). Holmul chak tok wayaab individuals were part of the Seven Divisions, along with people from Yaxha, Topoxte, Naranjo, and Buenavista del Cayo (Tokovinine 2013:99–109). The passage on Stela 5, therefore, is not dissimilar from a retrospective description of the accession of the first Tikal ruler with Teotihuacan connections, Yax Nuun Ahiin, in the narrative of Tikal Stela 31, where he “took twenty-eight provinces”—a concept known from later references to “twenty-eight lords”—upon assuming the high office (Stuart 2011; Tokovinine 2013:113–15).

The initial emphasis on the regional political context gives way to different concepts at the end of the first generation of La Sufricaya rulers. The dedication of Structure 2 and its subsequent conversion into a funeral temple mark a shift in memories and messages. For the first time at La Sufricaya, its history looks inward. The person and the place remembered are La Sufricaya itself and its ruler. The presence of a Late to Terminal Classic altar and stela in front of Structure 2 (Tomasac and Estrada Belli 2003:275) suggests that some of these memories endured through time, although there is no way to establish whether they were referencing the burial or some other narrative associated with the building. If the former was true, whoever was buried in Structure 2 became venerated as an important ancestor more than 300 years later. Yet the destruction and dispersal of all the inscribed Early Classic monuments implies that not all memories were maintained. The termination of the structures on top of Group 1 also points to choices in the treatment of memories. Parts of the “house” built by chak tok wayaab were encased within a platform to become another ancestral shrine, whereas other buildings nearby did not fare as well. The murals inside Structure 1 were “deactivated” and protected by a coating of white paint before the rooms were carefully filled (Hurst et al. 2008) but not destroyed, suggesting that the termination of the building did not signify a complete disregard for the inscribed memories it contained.

A FUNCTIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

Paraphrasing Smith (2003:70–72), the inequalities and tensions between the political actors involved in the creation and modification of La Sufricaya found their expression not only in the selection of and change in the inscribed collective memories but also in the shifting functions and layout of the palatial complex. It was intended as a staging area for a wider set of relationships in the post-378 CE regional order. Yet at the same time it served as the seat of a local ruling family, which perhaps struggled to maintain its own political and social base after the dislocation from the core of Holmul. The “hegemonic”

performances of authority and memory at La Sufricaya could foster, in Joyce and Hendon's (2000:155) words, "a community with common experience, common social memories," but more than one political community was involved.

The layout of La Sufricaya skillfully used the natural topography of the area in creating a sequence of increasingly monumental and restricted spaces (see figures 7.3, 7.9). The western and southern edges of the monumental core were bounded by natural topography. The terrain on the northeast side—along the ridge toward Holmul—was gentler, and this is where the intended entry point likely was. Visitors would find themselves in the North Plaza, with access to the slightly sunken ball court and a view of the 50-m-wide monumental stairway leading to the South Plaza (figure 7.9). The difference in elevation between the two effectively separated them into distinct performance spaces: only those near the edge of either zone would be able to see each other.

Ascending the steps brought visitors within a direct view of Structure 2 and Group 1. However, only the massive stairway of Group 1 faced north toward the point of entrance to the plaza. That stairway probably served a twofold function. The main set of tall and broad steps, with the open platform on the top, could provide the focal point or the stage for public performances. This is precisely the kind of stairway consistently associated with performances in Classic Maya imagery and narratives (Miller 1998:193). For example, a stairway of similar dimensions (judging from the size of human figures) in the scenes on the murals at Bonampak serves as a setting for dancing and the presentation of captives (Miller 1986; Miller and Brittenham 2013:104). In addition to the main steps optimized for performance, a narrow stairway of lower steps in the middle offered a more comfortable way of getting to and from Group 1. Once the visitor stepped down from the platform on the edge of Group 1, she or he would be completely invisible to everyone in the South Plaza 11 m below. The area of Structure 1 was even more private: one would have to walk along the west walls of the buildings to get inside the courtyard of the complex from the south. Even after the termination of the palace, the stairway on top of Structure 1 platform was on its south side, so it continued to face away from the plaza spaces. Unfortunately, little remains of other structures on top of Group 1, so it is unclear how the Structure 1 cluster was integrated into the rest of the complex.

While the imposing northern facades and stairways of the South Plaza and Group 1 were clearly meant to impress visitors with fine masonry, the western, eastern, and northern sides of the elevated areas were built on a more modest scale. Excavations to the west of Group 1 (Tokovinine 2007) revealed steps and platforms of rough limestone blocks, crude floors, scraped bedrock

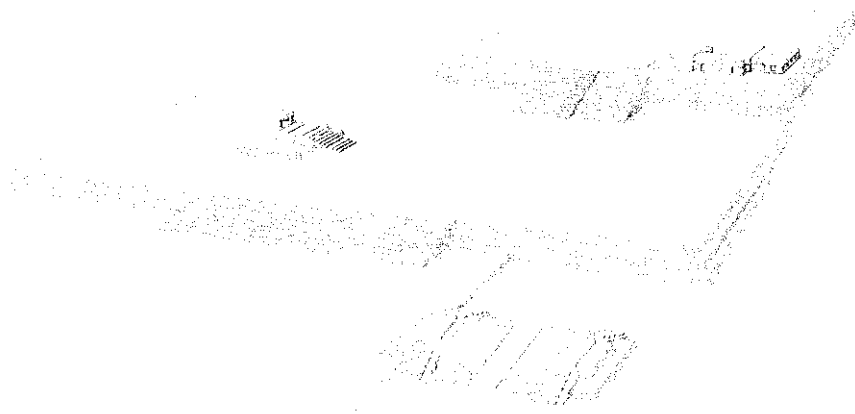


FIGURE 7.9. *View of La Sufricaya from the north (drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

surface, and middens. This was likely not the face of the palace important guests were supposed to see. This stark contrast highlights the stage-like quality of La Sufricaya and also points to potential difficulties in obtaining necessary resources in the face of the imperative to quickly construct a functional political center. La Sufricaya looks like an open-air theater equipped with a private dwelling for its manager and his family. As to the question of the audience and performers, there are additional hints.

The size of the ball court is the first important clue. The Classic Maya ball game was a sport and spectacle sponsored and performed by courtly elites, often in the context of visits and feasting involving members of allied or subordinate royal families and their attendants (Fox 1996; Moriarty 2012; Tokovinine 2002; Zender 2004). In the case of Copan, the foundation of the royal court was associated with the centralization of ball game practices: ball courts in “hinterland” communities were abandoned, and a large ball court was constructed at Copan (Canuto 2002). Similarly, the construction of the ball court at La Sufricaya indicated that local rulers could sponsor ball games and possibly associated feasting in which members of local communities or visitors from other royal courts could participate. Investigations at Holmul (Estrada Belli 2002:108–9) failed to uncover an Early Classic ball court within the city’s ceremonial core.

With its broad stairways leading to the top of lateral buildings, the ball court at La Sufricaya is highly accessible but also remarkably small, with a 3 × 12 m central playing alley. Based on pre-Columbian imagery and ethnohistoric sources (Leyenaar 1978), one can deduce that only 2–6 people could have

played the game in this setting, with fewer than 100 people in total attendance assuming spectators occupied the ball court itself, the spaces north and south of the alley, as well as the edge of the South Plaza (that privileged spot was marked by a platform). In other words, the size of the ball court suggests that the community involved in local public events like a ball game, something that happened regularly, was rather small.

In contrast to the ball court, the plazas at La Sufricaya could easily accommodate over 1,000 participants and viewers. Judging from the layout of the preserved sections, the murals in Room 1 once depicted hundreds of Maya noblemen and scores of Teotihuacan warriors. Mural 1-2 alone showed at least 96 Maya individuals and 25 Teotihuacanos. There is no evidence that all these people resided at La Sufricaya, but the site's plazas could have served as a setting for performances of such a scale. The presence of stelae with dates spanning two decades suggests that La Sufricaya saw at least two period-ending events. Like other period-ending events described in detail on some Late Classic monuments, including Naranjo Stela 30 (Tokovinine 2013:104), these rituals probably involved offerings of copal, dedication of stelae, fire rituals, and dances. These were the occasions when members of broad political communities got together, as in the context of the large-group investiture described on Stela 5. Therefore, La Sufricaya may have been designed with a larger political landscape in mind. At times, the site would have been filled with lords (Sihiyaj K'ahk' himself?) and commoners from close and afar. Yet the events attended by the La Sufricaya court-proper would not have involved more than 100 potential viewers and performers from its vicinity, almost certainly including some people from Holmul.

There were other places like La Sufricaya in the post-entrada political landscape. For example, Stela 31 at Tikal mentions three different locations of period-ending events celebrated by Tikal lords, none of which is associated with Tikal's Mutal toponym or attested in other texts (Stuart and Houston 1994:49-51, figure 58). These places could be palace complexes or landmarks outside Tikal, such as the yet-unexcavated El Zapote. In terms of archaeological data, the site of Tres Islas is the most extreme Early Classic example of this kind—a hilltop provided with a name (K'inich Mo' Witz) and monuments, used as a setting of period-ending rituals by two dynasties, but associated with no immediate settlement (Tomasic and Fahsen 2004). If we look for Late Classic analogies, the best historical evidence comes from Petexbatun: Dos Pilas rulers performed period-ending rituals at multiple sites, including Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Tamarindito, and Seibal (Martin and Grube 2008:60-63; Stuart and Houston 1994:91-92). All of these sites have substantial settlements

and palatial complexes. Yet the overlord and his attendants (and possibly associated family members, vassals, messengers, and other visitors) could move between these locations. Such moves were likely truly massive events, through which the hegemony of Dos Pilas kings was re-experienced and reconstituted.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

La Sufricaya represents a bold attempt to create a palatial complex designed to serve a larger political order and to provide a new central place for locals and residents of nearby communities. In terms of the functional aspects of its spatial layout and organization, La Sufricaya is primarily a stage for public events and also a reclusive residence for its owners, their families, and attendants. The messages and memories embodied in Structure 1, the house of *chak tok wayaab*, and in the carved monuments found at the site consistently evoke the new Early Classic political order created by Sihyaj K'ahk', which was the likely source of power and authority of La Sufricaya rulers. Apart from the wider political network to which he belonged, the *nouveau ajaw* of La Sufricaya relied on or came from a Holmul-based *chak tok wayaab* lineage. The court had access to limited resources and a small local community, as evidenced in its later construction projects and in the diminutive size of the ball court. A shift in messages and identities was marked by the conversion of Structure 2 into a funeral shrine. Within a generation or two, however, the elite occupation at La Sufricaya came to an end. Former patrons and overlords no longer needed La Sufricaya rulers, or they failed politically themselves. If the Structure 2 burial marked a response to the new situation and a search for new strategies, that search proved unsuccessful. Yet *chak tok wayaab* nobles of Holmul apparently endured.

The brief life of the La Sufricaya court offers an important insight into the social and political processes responsible for the rise and fall of Classic Maya polities, sometimes created by and dependent upon certain charismatic rulers and their followers (see Fitzsimmons, chapter 8, this volume). One cannot help but compare La Sufricaya with another royal court that was founded a few decades later and under similar circumstances but that experienced a very different fate—the court of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' at Copan. The two places share a foundation narrative: the first king of Copan made pilgrimages to the distant Wite' Naah and was sometimes depicted as a Teotihuacan warrior (Fash and Fash 2000; Fash, Tokovinine, and Fash 2009; Stuart 2000, 2004). It is also only at Copan (Early Classic Stela 63, Motmot marker, Late Classic Altar Q) and La Sufricaya (Mural 7) that we find evidence of a distinct *haab*

calendar that involves counting solar days from sunset to sunset and not from sunrise to sunrise, as at other Classic Maya sites (Tokovinine 2010). However, there is an important difference in rhetoric between these two sites: while Copan rulers were kings in their own right, it seems that the authority of La Sufricaya rulers was based on their allegiance to powerful overlords, although the nature of that allegiance remains unclear.

During the reign of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and his successor, La Sufricaya and Copan looked remarkably similar (figure 7.10). The Yune platform at Copan, the foundation of the walled compound of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', was created in a single construction stage and was similar in size to Group 1 at La Sufricaya (Sedat 1997; Sedat and Lopez 2004). In fact, with its 11-m-high basal platform, faced with cut blocks and a 24-m-wide monumental access stairway, Group 1 would have probably offered a more impressive sight. Buildings of such volumetric scale did not appear at Copan until the sixth century (Sharer et al. 1999a, 1999b). Following the changes at Copan related to the 9.0.0.0.0 period ending (Fash, Fash, and Davis-Salazar 2004; Traxler 2004), the organization of the plaza spaces at the two sites also looked rather similar (two plazas and a ball court).

Nevertheless, Copan offers important points of difference from La Sufricaya, which may account for the historical differences between the two places. First, Copan was not, strictly speaking, a new place. The residential and public architecture of Copan plazas and the area immediately underneath the Early Classic royal compound predate the foundation of the Copan court by Yax K'uk' Mo' (Cheek 1983a, 1983b; Sharer et al. 1999a:229–30; Traxler 2001, 2003). Moreover, although the establishment of the Yax K'uk' Mo' compound created a new and markedly distinct section in Copan's spatial layout, the surrounding plazas and elite residential complexes, including the early versions of the Great Plaza and the Northeastern Courtyard Group, maintained their respective layouts and were eventually incorporated into the new palatial complex (Sharer et al. 1999a, 1999b; Traxler 2003). From its very beginning, Yax K'uk' Mo's court was at the center of a preexisting community into which local elites were apparently integrated. The integration of local elites attempted by the La Sufricaya court was clearly less successful. The initial size of the first public spaces and buildings, including plazas and the ball court, at Copan is impressive. The Great Plaza reached its full extent during the reign of the first Copan rulers (Cheek 1983b; Traxler 2003, 2004). Therefore, it appears that the ability of the early Copan rulers to incorporate the preexisting community and place into their court was crucial for its long-term survival. La Sufricaya's rulers either failed or never had an opportunity to attempt such an act of incorporation on

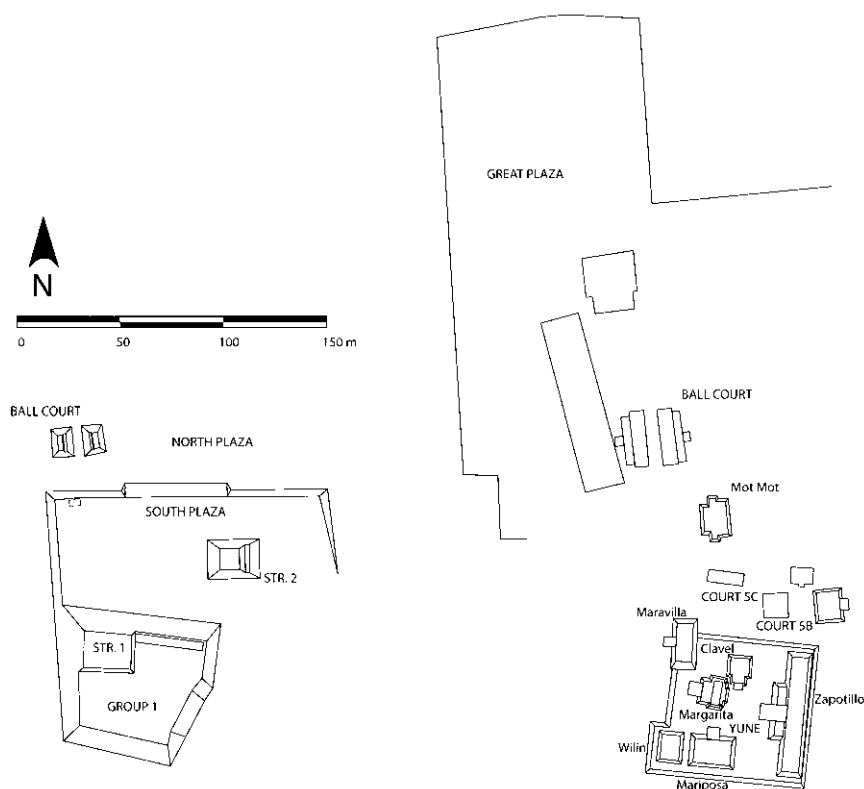


FIGURE 7.10. *Comparison of the spatial layouts of the La Sufricaya (left) and Copan (right) courts (same scale; drawing by Alexandre Tokovinine).*

the same scale. The moment regional political patrons were no longer present, La Sufricaya and its nouveau ajaw were doomed.

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*The Charismatic Polity**Zapote Bobal and the Birth
of Authority at Jaguar Hill*

JAMES L. FITZSIMMONS

I have never liked the term *polity*. All too often it is a sanitized way of avoiding the nuts and bolts of political organization, Classic Maya or otherwise. Of course, the term *polity* allows us to avoid problematic words like *state* and *chiefdom*, and it lets us to talk about Maya cities without having to explain their wide range of potential organizational capacities. It also, unfortunately, tends to obscure the relationship between ruler and subject, government and territory. It does not have to be this way, and part of what I hope to accomplish in this chapter—as well as in this volume—is to add real teeth to terms like this one.

That being said, what actually constitutes Classic Maya political units? One way to address this question would be to examine ancient Maya conceptions of territory. Certainly, many major Maya sites had Emblem Glyphs, and these did provide—for those who could read—the sense of a geographic place controlled by a “holy lord.” The real issue for understanding territory, however, is not an emblem glyph but what a Maya kingdom was to the people within it: how territorial boundaries were perceived by different socioeconomic strata, or whether clear boundaries were even in effect, are things that an emblem glyph simply cannot tell us.

I would argue that territorial boundaries are largely dependent upon authority. That is to say, if and where boundaries exist, they exist only because people believe in them. It need not be everyone: boundaries are ultimately enforced by those who have respect for them.

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Ultimately, then, it is the authority of the belief in the territorial boundary that sustains it.

Max Weber (1997 [1920]:324–82) defines authority, in turn, as itself derived from three basic sources: (1) rational-legal, (2) traditional, and (3) charismatic. Rational-legal authority is, at its heart, a mode of authority reinforced by laws, patterns, or rules defined by and attached to—at the very least—a ruling class. If we applied this rational-legal model to the Classic Maya, Maya polities would have clearly defined territorial borders, known to individuals both within that territory and without. Most Maya archaeologists would probably say that such borders were not clearly defined but that in certain areas—perhaps most visibly at places like Copan, Honduras—there were efforts by Maya rulers to inscribe formal authority on the landscape through far-flung stelae. Of course, stelae need not have been the only monuments employed to define territorial limits: at Zapote Bobal, Guatemala, for example, there are mounds atop natural hills on the outskirts of the city that may have served as explicit boundaries. To my knowledge, however, establishing strict, legally defined borders for Maya sites has been an elusive task at best. It has given rise to the polygon model (Mathews 1985, 1991), which, while quite useful, is admittedly vague when it comes to clear territorial borders.

Ideas about traditional authority within Maya political units have been very popular as well, from the role ancestors played in the built environment to the tensions between authorities based on kinship versus, say, kingship. If we applied a Weberian traditional model of authority to territorial organization, we might say that the borders of a given Maya polity rest on the sanctity of traditional boundaries and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority within those boundaries. In this scheme, the borders of a polity would largely stem from shared ideas as to where it begins and ends and would be defined according to moral (e.g., ancestral, divine), familial (e.g., kinship), or other customs and practices involved in the creation of traditional authority. The boundaries exist, in other words, because of sacrosanct convention and because that convention has been fostered over time (top-down or more laterally, as at Xunantunich, for example; see Robin and colleagues, chapter 4, this volume). One could include ideas about moral authority and community here—many have termed the fostering of such beliefs, for example, a royal strategy and the belief in the polity a social enchantment (Canuto and Fash 2004; Demarest 1992; Geertz 1980; Houston 1998). Collapse of a political unit, in this view, would be the failure of that enchantment to persist. The borders, in a sense, fail because people cease to believe that tradition holds any meaning.

These rational-legal and traditional models of territorial authority imply that political units are more or less permanent: whether through shared belief, communal practice, or strict control, a Maya polity is a fixed entity that we can circumscribe with more or less clear boundaries. Sure, the borders of a Maya polity can fluctuate, but such fluctuations do not negate the presence of a territorial core. To deal with major shifts, we might look at Weber's charismatic model. Charismatic authority, in the Weberian sense, relies upon the "specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person [or set of individuals], and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him" (Weber 1997 [1920]:358). Applying this to territoriality, we might say that borders in what I call the "charismatic polity" are inherently unstable, though they can often become traditionalized, rational-legalized, or a combination of both. In other words, charismatic leaders in the Maya area are accumulating social capital for their polity, which they are then transforming into rational-legal or traditional models of territorial authority. In this charismatic model of territorial authority, it is not enough for the rulers and the ruled to believe in a moral community or to create clear boundaries for their polity. These are stabilizing forces, to be sure, and I do believe they were in play to varying degrees at Maya settlements. But in this charismatic model, the one I find the most fitting for the Maya case, traditional and rational-legal authorities do not sustain territorial integrity or political unity per se. Rather, I would argue that what sustains the Classic Maya political unit in the charismatic model is force of character. So it is the personal ability of a K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' or a K'inich Janaab' Pakal, for example, that defines what the polity is. At the deaths of such seminal figures, the charismatic polity renegotiates its borders, its territory, and its identity.

The idea of movable boundaries, as the result of the waxing and waning of centralized political power, is nothing new, of course. Models of galactic polities in Mesoamerica, particularly among the Classic Maya, have been used to explain the basic political units there for some time. Working in Java in the 1960s, Stanley Tambiah used the term *galactic polity* to refer to classic models of kingship there and noted that political units in Southeast Asia were not strictly defined by permanent boundaries but rather were characterized by a fluidity or flexibility of boundary development dependent upon the diminishing or increasing power of the center.

Concepts of territory within the galactic polity model involved variable spheres of influence that diminished as royal power radiated outward from a center. Smaller and smaller political entities were conceptualized as radiating outward from the center and occasionally overlapping with one another. To

quote Tambiah, "If we keep in mind the expanding and shrinking character of the political constellations under scrutiny, a central, perhaps the central feature to be grasped is that although the constituent political units differ in size, nevertheless each lesser unit is a reproduction and imitation of the larger. Thus we have before us a galactic picture of a central planet surrounded by differentiated satellites, which are more or less "autonomous" entities held in orbit and within the sphere of influence of the center" (Tambiah 1976:112-13).

Each major "planet" of the galactic polity model, moreover, was perceived to be a theater state at the center of a territorial structure demarcated by the four cardinal directions. As with a Mesoamerican quincunx, this structure was characterized by four directions with a fifth at the center (Tambiah called this the "five-four" unit system). Four more, but significantly less important, cardinal points were situated in-between—and usually further away from—the major directions of north, south, east, and west, such that the territory of a polity could be conceptually divided into nine separate parts. Such conceptualizations created the idea of a polity as a physical and territorial manifestation of a mandala (*ibid.*:103-4). In other words, the polity was a tangible representation of celestial order in Southeast Asian cosmology and was thereby a reflection of local Buddhist and Hindu ideals.

For the Classic Maya, the galactic polity model has been translated into a way of describing capital centers loosely controlling a network or "galaxy" of subordinate sites (Demarest 1992, 1997; Geertz 1980; Tambiah 1976). In many ways, the galactic polity model works well. Much like the kingdoms of continental and island Southeast Asia, Classic Maya kingdoms could expand as galactic polities through warfare or a variety of other political and economic mechanisms, which allowed divine kings to attract the allegiance and tribute of a growing number of satellite states or centers. Large city-states like Calakmul and Tikal were in many ways analogous to the theater-states of Southeast Asia; like the Hindu and Buddhist kings of the galactic polities of Southeast Asia, Maya kings were expected to engage in a variety of performative, often public, world-renewing activities. The galactic polity model for Southeast Asia also accounts for the ways foreign influence strengthened the power of particular states in the ancient Maya lowlands: in both regions, foreign or "exotic" connections (such as with Classic Teotihuacan) created a sense of special knowledge or superiority among elites. Instead of a mandala for spiritual inspiration in the Maya area, we might have, applying the galactic polity model, a quincunx with the polity at center and the cardinal directions as rough boundaries. All told, there are many ways in which the galactic polity model positively serves to explore and explain the nature of ancient Maya polities.

However, there are some problems applying the galactic polity model to ancient Mesoamerica. As Tambiah (1976:113) notes, "One of the principal implications of cosmological models is that the center represents the totality and embodies the unity of the whole." Part of the idea behind the galactic polity model is that the palace and the capital embody the kingdom. Even the king himself is an embodiment of the realm, with the order of his affairs and his health a personification of the polity. In other words, the king and his immediate surroundings are—on a micro-level—mandalas and themselves representations of the celestial order exemplified—on a macro-level—by the capital and its galaxy of subordinate centers. Yet, this attitude is not particularly represented in Classic Maya inscriptions or material culture. While kings and the other occupants of their kingdoms may have viewed themselves as representations of a celestial order, imitating more powerful kingdoms and political figures in terms of site layout¹ or behavior, the strict, nested approach to political order and embodiment we find in Southeast Asian galactic polities is not one the ancient Maya appear to have used.²

This nested approach is tied into a larger problem with the galactic polity model, as applied to the ancient Maya, for it is linked to Buddhist and Hindu ideas about activity and passivity in kingship. The king of a strong galactic polity in Southeast Asia, "supreme and ascendant," was charged with maintaining and restoring order, performing rites, maintaining the royal harem, and carrying out war for captives or for booty. Apart from the waging of war, an endeavor the king was expected to pursue *actively*, the ideal king of a galactic polity was *passive*. As both S. Moertono and Stanley Tambiah have argued, the classic principles of kingship in the galactic polities of Southeast Asia were based upon "non-interference, nonefficient causality, and passivity" (ibid.:119): because kings were supposed to be stable representations of the polity and the cosmos, they emanated "beneficent influences," and through simple possession of "merit" they were believed to overcome social misfortunes like disease and drought passively (Moertono 1968:37). Active legislation and "active participation in the affairs of state was left to . . . dignitaries" (ibid.:36), so that in theory, particularly "drastic, disturbing and impetuous decisions and acts of kings could . . . be prevented from becoming obligatory precedents (Tambiah 1976:119)." In practice, of course, Tambiah notes that kings could and did violate this ideal, but passivity was perceived as the rule and not the exception. Among the Classic Maya, I would argue that the ideal for kingship was quite the opposite. While a king may have perceived himself as an embodiment of the kingdom, there is as yet no evidence that others in the kingdom saw him in the same way. He

was not a passive representation of the polity. If anything, the ideal Maya king was supposed to be active.

Rather than apply the Southeast Asian example to the lowlands wholesale, let us look at indigenous models of political power in ancient Mesoamerica or, more particularly, at models of what power and authority were to the Classic Maya. We might look at classic Maya power as a relationship involving both the assertion and the acceptance of claims to authority (see, e.g., Houston and Stuart 1998). Formalized by laws, customs, or regulations, power is coalesced through actions, such as the creation of a stela (Stuart 1996). One is powerful through action. Power is not in stasis. Authority is not in stasis. Rather, it accrues over time and through powerful actions undertaken by the ruler and, by extension, the elites.

If we extend this theory of power to a site and how it is viewed by other sites, then territorial borders are not fixed in time and space *per se* but are extensions of how powerful the site is. Tradition, whether it is based upon what Patricia McAnany (1995) has called the “principle of first occupancy” (e.g., a means of legitimizing inequality and land tenure through reference to ancestors) or on a shared collective belief in political hegemony as Houston and others have proposed (Houston et al. 2003), is an outgrowth of—and a condition continually reinforced by—the action and exertion of power. So are legal-rational definitions of political authority. In the Classic Maya mind-set, I propose that the acts of power are what is important to territory. Kings assert their authority, moral or otherwise, through action; lineages assert their dominance over territory through repetitive activities that tie the living to the dead. The action is primarily what sustains the polity and its borders. Thus it is not so much that the Classic Maya did not share similarities with the galactic polities of Southeast Asia—in fact, from the emphasis on cardinal directions to the scores of central sites surrounded by shifting sets of “planets,” there are many to be seen—but that the underlying reasoning behind those polities is totally different. Once this reasoning, this nesting, orderly, and hierarchical approach to power is absent, we are left with groups of major sites, with shifting groups of satellite centers, whose territory fluctuates based on the power of the respective centers. In short, we are not necessarily left with galactic polities at all.

If we apply this theory of power to Maya political units, I would argue that what we are left with are polities largely dependent upon charismatic authority. Are there baseline beliefs and ideas in place, in short, aspects of ideology, that would assist in the creation of borders for a Maya polity or in the characterization of authority? Of course: notions about the gods being created at Palenque or the mythological ancestry of the Naranjo dynasty were probably

attached to specific ideas of physical, territorial ownership. But we should not confuse baseline beliefs with action. The charismatic polity is not something that is passively defined but something that is renegotiated on a periodic basis by exemplary individuals (or at the very least, individuals who successfully sell themselves as exemplary). Each of these individuals tries to attach rational-legal or traditional modes of authority to his respective territories, but with varying degrees of success. Who were the most successful ones? We call them the founders of dynasties, the seminal leaders of the pre-Columbian Maya past.

Does the idea of a charismatic polity work everywhere? Probably not. Proposing universal theories almost always gets us into trouble. In fact, there are probably many Classic Maya political units that had all three components—rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic—in varying proportions, which themselves determined their territorial integrities. The charismatic component is certainly the most fleeting of the three, as it is subject to the victories and disasters of particular individuals. But to my mind, charismatic polity organization explains how territories that are at great geographic distance, as per the “overking model,” can function as superiors and subordinates. I would say that we can call Maya political units “charismatic polities” for which, at various points in time, rational-legal or traditional authority is strong enough to be implemented.

Let us look at a place where, for the majority of the Classic period, territorial authority was ill defined and where—I believe—the charismatic model I just presented was the major factor in that authority (figure 8.1). It was in a sense almost a purely “charismatic” polity. I am talking about the area immediately south of the San Pedro Martir, in the Department of Petén, Guatemala, loosely associated with a political entity known as Hiix Witz, or Jaguar Hill. This area does not seem to have had a long tradition of centralized leadership. Even in terms of settlement, the area is noticeably decentralized, with many house platforms seemingly set without regard to an architectural epicenter.

La Joyanca, as seen in figure 8.2, is a case in point. Settled from the end of the Middle Preclassic all the way to approximately AD 1000 (or beyond), La Joyanca is fairly typical of the south bank settlements stretching from the edges of the La Florida (*Namaan*) and El Peru (*Waka'*) polities. It is so dispersed as to lack a clear center, with the only real, albeit tenuous, candidates for a political-urban residential heart the Guacamaya Group.³ In other words, La Joyanca was a long-term, physically decentralized collection of settlements that may have been, for all intents and purposes, locally governed by collections of elites with a weak (or nonexistent) overarching political structure. A similar story may have unfolded at the site of El Pajal, a small center



FIGURE 8.1. *Zapote Bobal and the Maya area (map by Laura Gamez and James L. Fitzsimmons).*

less than 20 km to the west of Zapote Bobal. This was perhaps the original home of the Hiix Witz Emblem Glyph: the only major architectural group, graced with a rather large monumental staircase, looks more like the Grupo Guacamaya at La Joyanca than a proper, centralized seat of authority.⁴ Only at Zapote Bobal is there anything that approaches clear, centralized leadership and a regional capital. From research carried out there intermittently since 2004, it would seem as if Zapote Bobal was the heart of the Late Classic polity of Hiix Witz (Gamez and Fitzsimmons n.d.).

In their inscriptions, outsiders from the Usumacinta, Central Petén, and Petexbatun regions habitually portray Hiix Witz as a valuable (if militarily coerced) ally and—in the case of Dos Pilas—a five-year refuge for the exiled

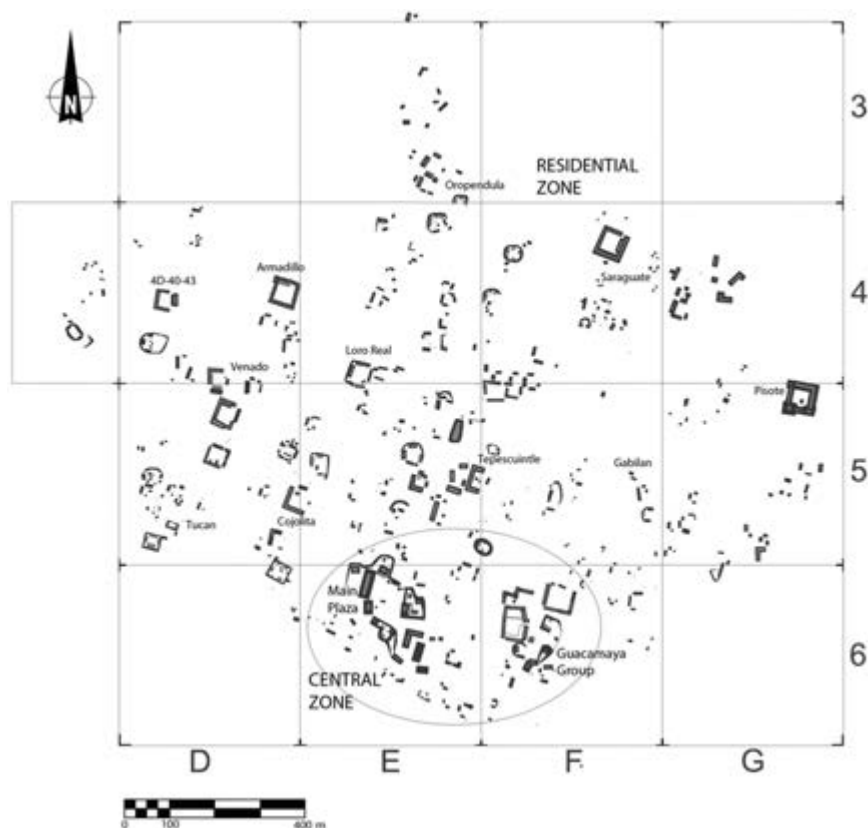


FIGURE 8.2. *La Joyanca and its environs* (map by Laura Gamez and the Proyecto Peten-Noroccidente).

ruler B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil in the late seventh century AD (Federico Fahsen, personal communication, 2004; see also Guenter 2003). The most frequent—and visually stunning—references to Hiix Witz are, however, as a defeated center, a martial proving ground for the elites of more prominent sites. One victim of these wars, a Chan Ahk of Hiix Witz, is featured as a decapitated head on a pyrite mirror recovered from the tomb of Ruler 4 at Piedras Negras (Houston et al. 1999). Monuments at Zapote Bobal, not surprisingly, portray the dynasts in a decidedly different light, with much of the standard fare we expect from Classic Maya inscriptions—including, incidentally, mention of a captive belonging to a Hiix Witz lord on a fragment recovered in 2005 (Fitzsimmons 2005). A royal palace and several temple-pyramids situate this

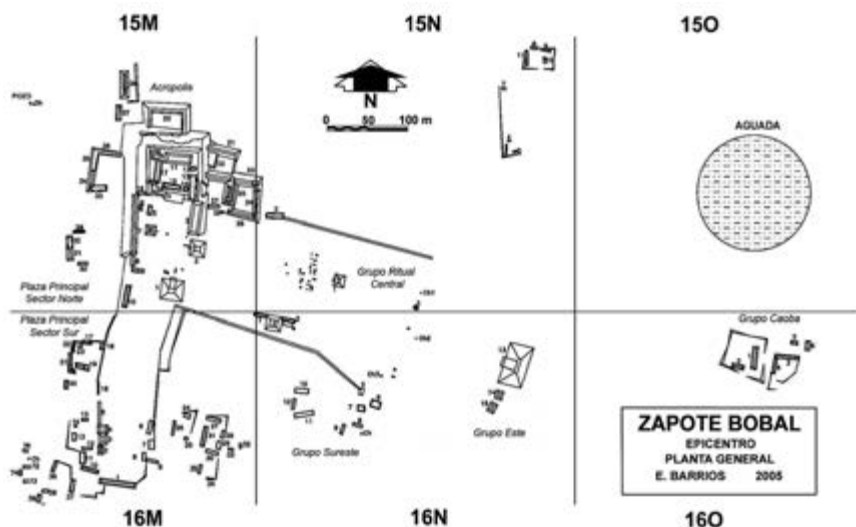


FIGURE 8.3. *The epicenter of Zapote Bobal, Guatemala (map by Edy Barrios).*

center in a way that is markedly different from La Joyanca or El Pajaro. In fact, Zapote Bobal looks a lot like La Florida and its immediate neighbor to the southeast, Mactun, to the point where it would appear that the city center at Zapote Bobal is following a more-or-less standard model of what a Maya site in the Late Classic should look like (figure 8.3).

Yet, despite the fact that the scale of construction within Zapote Bobal befits a long-lived ancient Maya center, with large buildings and monuments in such numbers as to evoke a sense of a “heroic past” (indeed, the largest temple-pyramid at the site is approximately 35 m in height), the site appears to have flourished for at most 250 years, collapsing by AD 850. Ceramics from test pits and other excavations near the Acropolis, for example, consist of primarily Late and Terminal Classic (AD 600–850) types (Gamez, Fitzsimmons, and Forné 2007).

This is not to say that there is no Preclassic or Early Classic presence at Zapote Bobal but that any presence is at best minor. As Melanie Forné (2007) has observed, small quantities of Late Preclassic sherds (La Laguna complex) have been recovered in various parts of the site epicenter, including a small quantity atop what would become the Acropolis in the Late Classic. The natural hill there, upon which the palace was built, has yielded some evidence of Late Preclassic ceramics similar to those found at La Joyanca. There—as elsewhere in the epicenter—unfortunately, the earliest materials

are mixed with Late Classic types. Similar mixed contexts are evident for the Early Classic facet (Laguna Perdida complex) in the epicenter at Zapote Bobal, and no purely Early Classic structures or floors have been identified there. By comparison, the Late Classic (Vista Hermosa complex) is well represented everywhere at the site, with a small Terminal Classic (Laguna del Yeso complex) facet spread from the Acropolis to the residential groups of the site center.

Forné (*ibid.*:139–43) has interpreted the Late Preclassic and Early Classic ceramics at Zapote Bobal as the result of one of two phenomena: (1) there was a Late Preclassic and Early Classic facet at Zapote Bobal, but it was minor and not associated with any of the large structures at the site, including the royal palace; or (2) the Late Preclassic and Early Classic sherds, mixed with Late Classic materials, represent local refuse brought into the epicenter. In either case, it would appear that at the dawn of the Late Classic, the residents of Zapote Bobal were engaged in a massive construction effort. Indeed, the Late Classic facet at Zapote Bobal has been divided by Forné into two phases, Vista Hermosa 1 (ca. AD 600–700) and Vista Hermosa 2 (ca. AD 700–800).⁵ If one looks at the distribution of Vista Hermosa 1 versus Vista Hermosa 2, it is clear that the first Acropolis, much of the Main Plaza, and the Grupo Ritual Central were originally built during Vista Hermosa 1 and modified during Vista Hermosa 2.

Overall, then, there is a considerably long history of occupation in the general vicinity, if not at Zapote Bobal itself, dating back to the Late Preclassic (400 BC–AD 250). Yet, it would seem there is a clear break with this past at the beginning of the Late Classic: temple-pyramids, a royal palace, and hieroglyphic altars and stelae all apparently appear without local precedent. The contrast between the Late Classic and what came before suggests the imposition of a relatively new political reality upon an older social landscape. All existing hieroglyphic texts from the site, like the ceramics, also support this view: the dedication dates for the monuments at Zapote Bobal range from about AD 640 to 750. Why the break with the past? What happened to precipitate the apparently rapid growth of Zapote Bobal during the 600s?

From inscriptions at the site of Dos Pilas, it appears that the Hiix Witz polity played a major role in the dynastic civil war raging between Dos Pilas and its much larger rival, Tikal. As Federico Fahsen and colleagues (2003) and Stanley Guenter have noted (Guenter 2003:24), the king of Dos Pilas, B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil, was forced to flee his site on 9.12.0.8.3 4 Ak'bal 11 Muwan (December 8, 672 Gregorian) after it was successfully raided by his relative, the king of Tikal, Nuun Ujol Chaak. After a brief and probably fitful stay at a

place called Chaahk Naah “Rain-God House” (an undiscovered site), the fleeing king took refuge at Hiix Witz. He stayed there, an exiled king at a foreign site, for almost five years: from 9.12.1.0.3 9 Ak’bal 6 Yaxk’in (AD June 27, 673) to 9.12.5.10.1 9 Imix 4 Pax (AD December 21, 677). It was at Hiix Witz that he waited for his fortunes to change. Why here? I would argue that he stayed at Hiix Witz because it was developing—but not completely developed—in the Late Classic and was close to a number of allied polities, including Namaan (La Florida) as well as the ancient and powerful kingdom of Waka’ (El Peru; see *ibid.*:26). These polities were vassals of the even greater power Calakmul, which was ultimately responsible for B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil regaining his throne: as Guenter notes (*ibid.*), the only reason he was able to leave Hiix Witz was because the king of Calakmul intervened directly and forced Nuun Ujol Chaak to abandon Dos Pilas.

Five years is a long time. Do we know that B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil was bidding his time specifically at Zapote Bobal (Fitzsimmons n.d.)? In truth, given that neither site has yet provided clear evidence for his presence,⁶ one could make the argument that B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil fled not to Zapote Bobal but to El Pajal, which also has a Late Classic facet and the Hiix Witz emblem glyph proper. However, Zapote Bobal had the architectural appearance of a centralized Maya center in the Late Classic, at the time B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil needed a place to flee. El Pajal, by contrast, was decentralized architecturally up until the collapse.⁷ It lacked a proper royal palace, large temple-pyramids, or other structures indicative of centralized kingship in the Petén. At Pajal, B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil the exile would have been a guest staying in a rather small elite compound, whereas at Zapote Bobal he might have had the privacy and prestige afforded by a proper palace set apart from the everyday comings and goings of the core population.⁸

Regardless of whether B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil stayed at Zapote Bobal specifically, a number of things are clear. First, the Hiix Witz emblem glyph is never accompanied by the words *k’uhul ajaw*, or “holy lord,” as is usual for polities where strong, centralized dynastic authority is present; rather, leaders of Hiix Witz, from the beginning in the 600s to the collapse, are simply called “lords.” Thus B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil was taking refuge in a place where there would theoretically be no conflict with any preexisting “holy lord” and hence no real conflict with rational-legal authority. Second, the fact that Central Petén-style royal architecture was a relatively recent development in the zone of Hiix Witz lends credence to the idea that there was no long tradition of centralized authority there; hence B’ajlaj Chan K’awiil was coming into the Hiix Witz polity at a time when new traditions were being molded.

Third, the production of Zapote Bobal as a centralized Maya polity appears to have been an intentional, rapid event precipitated by a select group of people. Many of the lords of Hiix Witz, from the 600s or beyond, bear the surname Ahk or Chan Ahk. While it is true that this surname predates the construction of Zapote Bobal (it can be found in the Early Classic at La Joyanca, for example),⁹ it is really in the 600s that this name becomes important and connected to Hiix Witz in the political inscriptions of foreign polities like Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan. The character of the site seems to be one of invented tradition: rapid growth and the adoption of a palace model, complete with complementary temples and large numbers of monuments, in a place that did not have a long-standing, complex political apparatus. The hieroglyphic monuments at Zapote Bobal are of such varying detail and workmanship—most of the altars, for example, appear not to have been carved and were cut rather haphazardly—that it is almost as if the ruling elites were more concerned with the appearance of a long-occupied Maya center than with its actual substance. The process of construction at Zapote Bobal almost certainly predates the arrival of B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil at Hiix Witz, to be sure, but not by more than approximately thirty–forty years. Thus it would seem as if the region of Hiix Witz was becoming strategically important in the 600s and that construction at Zapote Bobal was precipitated by the larger, momentous conflicts wracking the Central Petén at the close of the Early Classic period.¹⁰

At Zapote Bobal, therefore, we have (1) a site constructed in the Late Classic in clear imitation of a normative, Central Petén model; (2) a palace occupied by lords who did not have the inclination or the ability to take the *k'uhul ajaw* title; (3) an architectural and probably political phenomenon that broke with a long-established pattern; and (4) a polity established in a place immediately bordering a much older, more powerful kingdom (*Waka'*). Given all of these conditions, I find it very hard to believe that the authority invested in the kings of Late Classic Hiix Witz could have been based on a legal-rational or traditional model. Rather, I propose that the polity was held together by ephemeral, charismatic authority and that Hiix Witz did not have the time or the ability to transform that charismatic polity organization into something more substantial based on rational-legal or traditional models of authority. The action of creating a royal palace, the action of creating many hieroglyphic monuments, was in part what made Hiix Witz what it was.

Of course, action is not necessarily reality. Despite the efforts of the Hiix Witz dynasts and contemporaries like Bird Jaguar IV of Yaxchilan or K'inich Ich'aak Chapat at Tonina, erecting monuments and architecture does not de facto change the physical or political realities of a polity or its borders. But

action is part of the program, and as such I believe it is appropriate to look at the borders of Maya polities as fluctuating and largely dependent upon their power and regional influence as represented in dynastic history, economics, and other aspects of material culture. While we can draw upon models from other parts of the world, including those formulated for “galactic polities,” I suggest that we should devise an indigenous Maya conception of the polity. Charismatic or otherwise, such an endeavor will help us to better define what a Classic Maya polity actually was.

NOTES

1. Copan and Quirigua come to mind on this, although that imitation was anything but a way to demonstrate a hierarchical, cosmological order with Copan as the center.

2. In the most highly centralized polities of Southeast Asia, moreover, this structure even extended to royal marriages. As Tambiah states, whereas in less complex polities marriage alliances between elites in different areas were common and created unity, the ideal for a complex, galactic polity is for the king to form a harem from local elites, such that nobles of different families within the site are contributing to the center and themselves embodying the larger structure of the polity. As we know from the Classic Maya inscriptions, Maya kings married numerous women endogamous as well as exogamous to their polities; they seem to follow a pattern Tambiah associates with the less complex polities of Southeast Asia or, at best, intermediary between the least and most complex.

3. The ceremonial heart is the Main Plaza.

4. The other candidate is, as Stephen Houston et al. (2006) have noted, La Honradez.

5. To date, it has not been possible to strictly divide the end of the Late Classic and the beginning of the Terminal Classic, as Terminal Classic sherds have thus far been mixed with Vista Hermosa 2. Nevertheless, the ceramic sequence more or less matches the trajectory of events in monumental inscriptions. The last texts at Zapote Bobal—as well as inscriptions at other sites mentioning Hiix Witz—date to the late eighth century.

6. One could say that this is not something B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil or his allies would remember fondly. It is one thing to erect a record of Hiix Witz at Dos Pilas *ex post facto*, after B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil had already returned. It is another to inscribe humiliation for posterity as it is happening.

7. There is a hieroglyphic record there, however. See Stuart (2008), for example.

8. One of the more interesting things about the statement referring to B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil at Hiix Witz, on Dos Pilas Hieroglyphic Stairway 2, Step 5, is that the

final phrase reads *t'abay hiix witz* "it goes up, Hiix Witz." *T'abay* is often used in architectural contexts as a way of describing things being raised up. One has to wonder if the reason why Zapote Bobal is so different architecturally from El Pajalal is because Zapote was transformed, at least in part, by B'ajlaj Chan K'awiil's exile. Of course, centralizing forces were already at work there in the 640s, well before the exile, but these may also have been related to the war.

9. Most inscriptions at Zapote Bobal, as well as at La Joyanca and El Pajalal, mention various individuals bearing the surname Chan Ahk, suggesting that members of this lineage were prominent regional political figures. The earliest mention of a local Chan Ahk, for example, is at La Joyanca, on Stela 1, and relates a period-ending celebration for 9.2.10.0.0 3 Ajaw 8 K'umk'u (AD March 21, 485). Despite the connections among La Joyanca, El Pajalal, and Zapote Bobal, though, the Chan Ahk lineage at Zapote appears to have been on a unique path in the Late Classic.

10. One model, originally developed for Monte Alban, which may be useful for explaining the growth of Zapote Bobal, is the "disembedded capital" model originally proposed by Richard Blanton (1976a, 1976b, 1978) and subsequently elaborated upon by Alexander Joffe (1998) for a very different part of the world (Egypt and Mesopotamia).

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*Governing Politics**Royal Courts and the
Written Landscape of Late
Classic Maya Politics*

SARAH E. JACKSON

The authors in this volume examine Classic Maya polities, wrestling with issues of what they looked like, how they were organized, and to what degree they were integrated. Previous understandings of Maya polities have frequently focused on the debate between centralized and decentralized models (Fox et al. 1996); the sites studied and the types of evidence examined impact the resulting interpretations as much as actual differences in ancient organization. While revisiting the centralized-decentralized dichotomy addresses important issues related to mode of integration, the nature of structural replication and social organization, and key resources for polity development, other pressing questions about polities emerge that are not easily addressed within this binary framework. In this chapter, I explore how connection and difference between polities are simultaneously activated and how the Classic period landscape might be understood as one characterized not only by variation but also by flux and change. In exploring these issues, I bring to this discussion a focus on the official structures of Maya polities, as recorded in Classic era hieroglyphic texts. Specifically, I use accounts of the institution of the royal court to explore the structure and organization of Late Classic city-states.

These data suggest that common governing elements structured many polities across the lowlands, acting as mutually comprehensible “building blocks” of governance. At the same time, significant variation is present

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across the political landscape that shows a flexibility and reinterpretation of political identity in different places, as part of defining local places. Taken together, these observations suggest a common and shared framework that is nonetheless implemented in divergent ways. This diversity is also manifested in the contrasts evident in these data between articulation of boundaries and difference between polities, on the one hand, and the simultaneous hierarchical integration observed between neighboring sites of differing size and influence on the other. The resulting view of the political landscape does not easily support either strictly centralized or decentralized models and indicates the necessity of reframing these modes of understanding Maya political units in other terms.

My concern in this chapter is with the official governing structures of Maya polities, in particular, the institution of the royal court. As previously recognized (e.g., Fash 1983a, 1988; Houston 1993; Houston and Stuart 2001; Jackson 2005, 2013; Stuart 1992, 1993), the nature of governance in Maya polities shifted during the Late Classic era. The long-term emphasis on the singular authority of the *k'uhul ajaw* (holy lord) was modified to include a variety of other elite individuals—members of the court—who played roles within the political hierarchy. While the *k'uhul ajaw* of each polity retained his joint political and religious authority, during the Late Classic period many of these leaders adopted political strategies that allowed for the development of other key players within the official organization of the polity. The reasons for this change have been hypothesized to include efforts to keep increasingly powerful nobles close at hand and the shoring up of the waning power of the royalty (Fash 1983b; Fash et al. 1992; Houston and Stuart 2001; Jackson 2005). Either way, attempts to modify political structures in the Late Classic represent strategic adjustments during the period of change that predates the era of the collapse.

In discussing Maya polities, I use the court and its members as shorthand to represent the polity. This move requires some explanation, since—as discussed in many of the chapters in this book—multiple components contributed to both the idea and reality of the polity in ancient Maya contexts. Given my focus on the written (i.e., textually recorded) landscape of political organization, my emphasis on textual discussion of courtly offices and governmental organization is intended to illuminate the ways an idea of a “polity” was recorded in an official, historical sense and to access an emic, or internal, way of talking about the official structure of the polity. Significantly, the court can be read not only as a locus of power and a central space for official structures but also as a crucible for the construction of local identities and an arbiter of societal norms. In this way, the royal court represents an idealized framework

and an accepted model for how a polity should be organized in terms of its official channels. This synecdoche of court-for-polity inevitably focuses on the “official story” of Maya polities as recorded in written texts and elides the wide range of experiences that would have existed within a particular city-state. That is, the textual perspective privileges perspectives of the elites who participated in governance and is not a reliable or revealing view for exploring the varied experiences of non-elite Maya individuals or their conceptions of the polity; however, the performative and ideologically productive nature of the court does mean that non-court members may still have related to, or at least been aware of, local conceptions of identity and belonging that emanated from the courtly center.

Despite this potential limitation, the characterization of the formalized structure of Maya polities that emerges from written records that discuss the court includes a complex picture of variation and local adaptation that moves beyond a skeletal or propagandistic understanding of how polities were structured in terms of their governing apparatus. For the purposes of understanding organization of, and variation in, Classic period polities, examining government structures provides an important first step.

WHAT DOES A POLITY “LOOK LIKE”? BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

A textual approach to polities and their governing structures allows us to see the basic units of official authority that shaped polities; examining these political building blocks across the Maya lowlands shows shared conceptions of how a polity should “look,” in terms of its political leadership, based on a suite of mutually intelligible political offices.

Before I discuss Late Classic era polities from this perspective, a brief introduction to the data set is warranted. The royal court can be broken down into components—particular positions or offices—that were commonly used and that allow us to compare polities and organization across the Maya world. These positions are formal offices below the level of the ruler, within the institution of the royal court. While past research on hieroglyphic titles has identified these and other titular glyphs, the functions, roles, and meanings of these titles have long been difficult to illuminate. My research on courtly members has indicated that there are five official positions or offices within the Late Classic court, ones marked by a formal accession event or rite of passage that parallels the accession of the ruler himself. That is, the three verbal expressions that are used to mark the movement of a *k'uhul ajaw* into office—*chum*

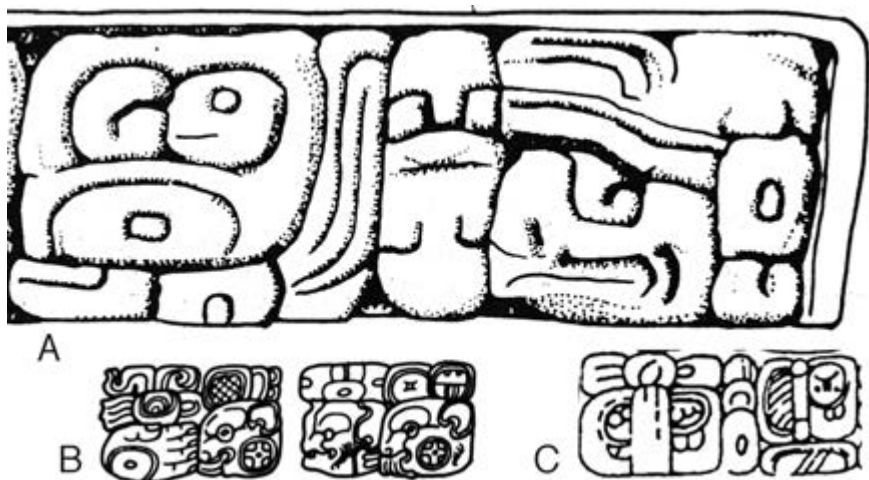


FIGURE 9.1. Verbs used for accession into office in both royal and non-royal contexts. Top to bottom: *chum* (seating), here of a “banded bird” (from wooden box, Tortuguero; drawing by Diane Griffiths Peck, reproduced with permission); *k'al huun* (headband tying), here of a *yajaw k'ahk'* (from Tablet of the Slaves, Palenque; drawing by Linda Schele. © David Schele); *joy* (encirclement), here of a *sajal* (from Lintel 1, El Cayo; drawing by John Montgomery, © 2000 John Montgomery).

(seating), *k'al huun* (involving the fastening of the headband), and *joy* (connected to encirclement)—are similarly used in conjunction with courtly offices (figure 9.1). This indicates an important similarity in the conception of official positions at different hierarchical levels within the Classic era governing apparatus. Thus the courtly titles I focus on are not merely honorifics or random appellatives but rather the widely accepted components of the political landscape of this era.

These five official positions—at least some of which are likely familiar to the reader—are *ajk'uhuun*, *sajal*, *yajaw k'ahk'*, *ti'huun* or *ti'sakhuun*, and “banded bird” (figure 9.2). To better understand them, I compiled and tracked all known instances of these courtly titles within the corpus of Maya hieroglyphic texts (yielding 221 examples at last count—a number that will no doubt continue to rise). The results allowed me to combine the particularistic information of individual stories with a composite perspective on the use and meaning of these titles over time and space. For the purposes of discussing Maya politics, this information provides both broad and specific views on polity governance and the written landscape of the Late Classic

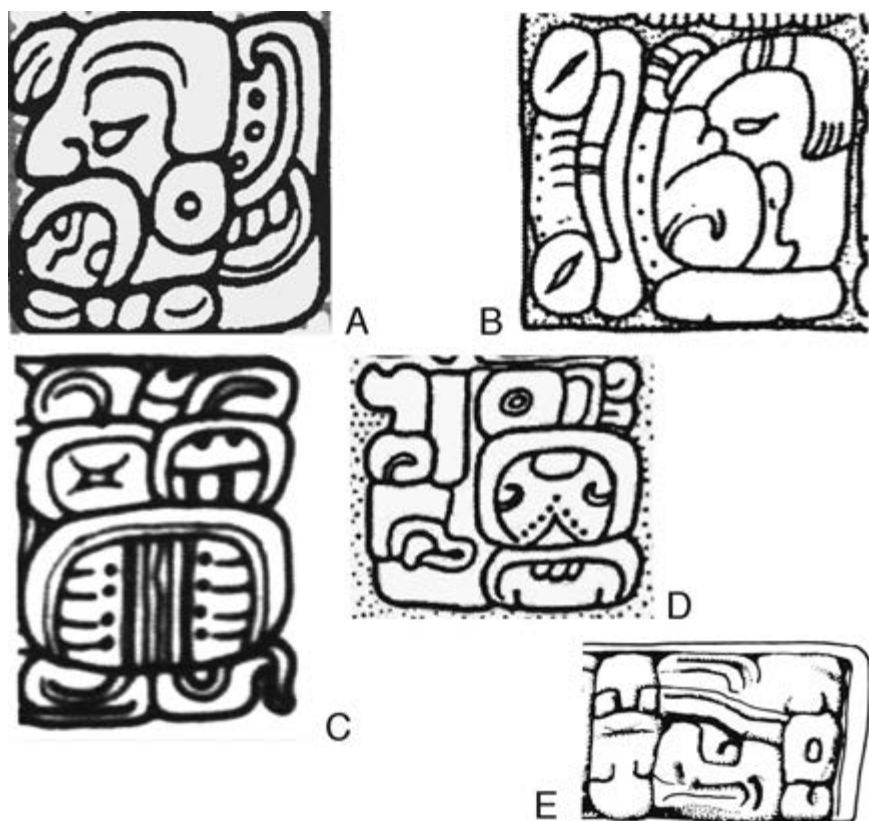


FIGURE 9.2. *The five courtly offices or positions. From top: sajal (from Lintel 1, Site R; drawing by Peter Mathews, reproduced with permission), ajk'uhuun (from Tableritos, Palenque; drawing by Linda Schele, © David Schele), yajaw k'ahk' (from Tablet of the Slaves, Palenque; drawing by Linda Schele, © David Schele), ti'huun/ti'sakhuun (from Panel 1, Pomona; drawing by Linda Schele, © David Schele), "banded bird" (from wooden box, Tortuguero; drawing by Diane Griffiths Peck, reproduced with permission).*

Maya. The combination of the official nature of these offices (denoted by the change-in-state accession event) and the shared usage of these five positions across time and space suggests a mild bureaucratization of offices, in which these roles are at least in part divorced from the specific individuals who held them (though the specificity of the hieroglyphic records does allow us to also entertain interests in specific names and histories of particular courtly officials [see Jackson 2013:25–60]).

The specifics of decipherment and interpretation of these titles are discussed at greater length elsewhere (Coe and Van Stone 2001; Houston 1993; Houston and Inomata 2009; Houston and Stuart 2001; Jackson 2005; Villela 1993; Zender 2004), so I will provide only a brief comment on the meanings of these positions. These titles have been notoriously difficult to decipher, with the more common ones (*sajal* and *ajk'uhuun*) having particularly lengthy interpretive histories. Past interpretations of these positions have included literal decipherments and contextual interpretations, as well as grammatical analyses; little agreement has emerged, however, in understanding the meanings or functional significance of these five terms.

Currently, we are left with possible decipherments of these titles as follows. *Ajk'uhuun* has variously been read as scribe (Coe and Kerr 1998; Houston 1993; Schele, Grube, and Martin 1998), messenger (Lacadena 1996:46), he who venerates (Jackson and Stuart 2001), and worshipper (Zender 2004:180). (A wide variety of currently less compelling interpretations of this glyph have also been suggested, including, among others, “he of the temple” [Ringle 1988], “architect” [Schele 1992], and “political mediator” [Stuart 1992].) *Sajal* has been parsed as regional governor (Stuart 1985), war captain (Schele 1991), or one who fears (Houston and Stuart 2001:61). *Yajaw k'ahk'* is clearly decipherable as “lord of fire” or “the fire’s lord” (*ibid.*:69) (or “fire’s vassal” [Zender 2004:197]), though the significance or function of this title remains cloudy, despite proposed interpretations that emphasize military (Martin and Grube 2000:181) or religious responsibilities, perhaps connected to fire drilling (Houston and Stuart 2001:69; Stuart 2005:18). Marc Zender (2004:210) suggests an amalgamation of these two realms with *yajaw k'ahk'* acting as “warrior priests.” *Ti'huun* or *ti'sakhuun* is also relatively clearly readable—“at the mouth or edge of the paper” and “at the mouth or edge of the white paper” (Houston and Stuart 2001:68–69) (or, variously, “speaker of/for the headband,” suggesting a role of spokesperson or intermediary [Zender 2004:221])—but it is even more opaque in terms of ancient meaning. Finally, “banded bird” is the nickname used for a visually recognizable title that has not yet yielded a firm decipherment (Stuart 2005:133–36). Clearly, consensus remains elusive.

Challenges of literal decipherment (or literal decipherments that do little to illuminate ancient significance) led me to attempt to uncover significant patterned associations in the corpus of hieroglyphic texts that would reveal the responsibilities or activities of each type of office holder. The very short answer to the question of whether these positions can be mapped functionally is “no.” Officers in each position took part in a variety of events. There

TABLE 9.1 Examples of different activities carried out by sajals.

<i>Activity Carried Out by Sajal</i>	<i>Example of Where Documented</i>
Fire drilling	Lintel 2, Laxtunich
Dancing	Lintel 1, Site R
Scattering	Lintel 1, La Pasadita
Capturing	Lintel 8, Yaxchilan
Conjuring	Lintel 14, Yaxchilan
Playing ball	Hieroglyphic Stair 2, Step X, Yaxchilan
Performing dedications	Jamb 1, Xcalumkin
Witnessing events	Carved head incensario, Group IV, Palenque

appears to have been great flexibility in how these positions were conceptualized locally, even as the same set of five offices was used at sites across the lowlands. For example, at sites across the lowlands we see sajals doing things as diverse as fire drilling, dancing, scattering, capturing, conjuring, playing ball, performing dedications, and witnessing events (table 9.1). In many cases, other officers undertook similar activities at different times and places as well.

Significantly, when the titles are spatially mapped across their area of usage, they each have distinct patterns. For example, the two most frequently used titles, *sajal* and *ajk'uhuun*, exhibit different spheres of usage (figure 9.3). While the adoption of the *ajk'uhuun* position seems fairly evenly distributed across the political landscape of the Maya world, in contrast, *sajals* are concentrated in the region of the Usumacinta River, with much thinner representation in other regions. Differential usage of the various positions suggests that despite the expansiveness in the ways official responsibilities were defined, different positions were not seen as purely interchangeable and were chosen or used with certain rationales in mind. Positions were selectively adopted and incorporated into the governing structures of different polities, representing a change in what official forms were taken by polities and their governments. Yaxchilan, for example, seems to have relied heavily on *sajals* as part of the consolidation and control of the polity and surrounding areas; at Tonina, *sajals* are also present, but *ajk'uhuuns*, *yajaw k'ahk's*, and *tisakhuuns* appear to have played a much larger role in local history.

Despite a lack of clarity or specificity about the precise nature of these positions, we can confidently assert that they were meaningful to the Maya (i.e., adopted in multiple places, indicating a shared system) and were

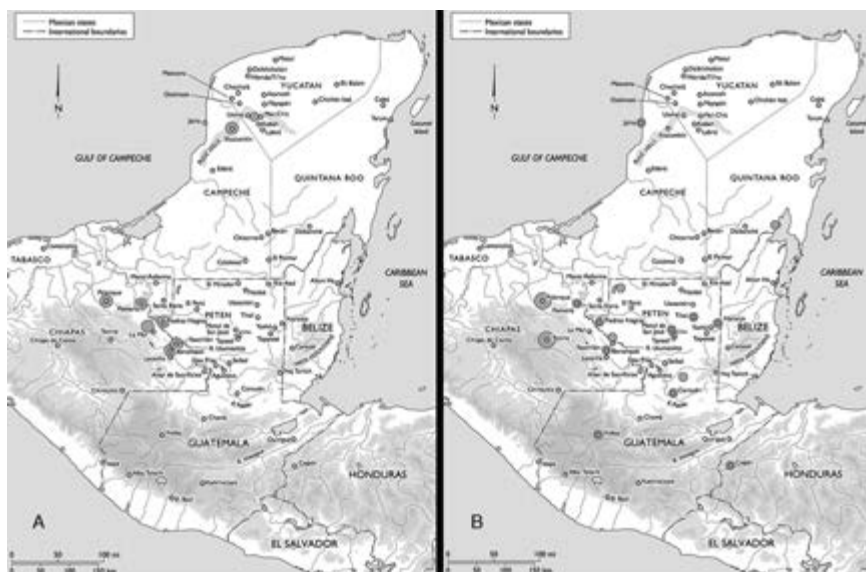


FIGURE 9.3. *Spatial distribution of courtly elite titles, contrasting sajals (a) and ajk'uhuuns (b). Relative size of circles indicates relative number of titles recorded (from Jackson 2013; reproduced with permission; all rights reserved).*

official positions (i.e., involved a rite of passage and were not simply honorifics); together with the leadership of the k'uhul ajaw, they formed the basis of governance in Late Classic Maya polities. Observations on the demographic and political shifts of the period are well documented—we know that a boom in the numbers of nobles occurred in the Late Classic period (Houston 1993:figure 5.4; Houston and Stuart 2001:75; Jackson 2005:164–74) (figure 9.4). The five titles discussed here were used across the Maya lowlands in the Late Classic to describe newly inclusive governing structures that incorporated non-ruling elites, who were metaphorically framed as supports for the central axis of the ruler (Fash 1989:70, 1991:78; Houston 1998: 352–56; Jackson 2005:237–38). Closely tracking these political changes through the membership of the court reveals that the overall trend of this period toward a multiplication of individuals officially implicated in the upper echelons of governance was in fact marked by differing strategies at different sites. Late Classic polities used shared vocabularies of governmental structures to enact locally efficacious adaptations to the changing sociopolitical climate of this period.

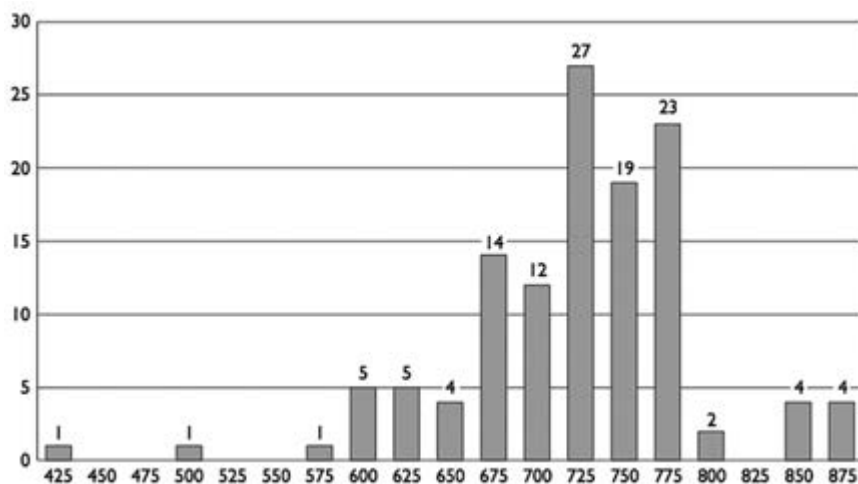


FIGURE 9.4. Late Classic “boom” in usage of courtly elite titles (in years AD) (from Jackson 2013; reproduced with permission; all rights reserved).

VARIATION IN THE OFFICIAL STRUCTURE OF POLITIES

Having identified a set of shared elements of polity governance that are employed across many polities and that represent a common set of political units, we can now look at the different ways these courtly positions are deployed in different places. The highest concentration of usage is found along the Usumacinta River and the surrounding drainage (figure 9.5). However, courtly titles are found as far afield as Copan and the Yucatan peninsula. While the extensive usage along the Usumacinta likely resulted from a sphere of intensive exchange and competition, other practices led to the dissemination of these positions across the landscape and serve as a reminder of the mutual awareness polities had of each other.

As noted, the five offices did not move across the landscape in lock step, however, and only one site—Palenque—exhibits all of the positions. Some sites—El Cayo, Xcalumkin—only had sajals. Chichen Itzá only recorded a yajaw k’ahk’. In contrast, Bonampak recorded a fuller contingent: ajk’uhuun, sajal, and ti’huun. Piedras Negras used two titles—ajk’uhuun and sajal; Pomona had two positions as well, but they were sajal and ti’sakhuun. Major sites, such as Tikal, in some cases only recorded use of one courtly position (ajk’uhuun in the case of Tikal), while somewhat smaller sites (such as Bonampak, where we see sajal, ti’huun, and ajk’uhhun used) supported a more elaborate courtly hierarchy. These anecdotal examples demonstrate that different sites exhibit



FIGURE 9.5. Spatial distribution of all courtly elite titles. Relative size of circles indicates relative number of titles recorded (from Jackson 2013; reproduced with permission; all rights reserved).

TABLE 9.2 Earliest recorded (and preserved) instances of courtly accessions into office.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Earliest Recorded Accession</i>	<i>Where Recorded</i>
Sajal	AD 697	Dumbarton Oaks panel, El Cayo area
Ajk'uhuun	AD 613	Monument 183, Tonina
Yajaw k'ahk'	AD 610	Carved head incensario, Group IV, Palenque
Ti'huun/ti'sakhuun	AD 608	Carved head incensario, Group IV, Palenque
"Banded bird"	AD 435	K'an Tok panel, Palenque

different patterns and traditions of usage of the various courtly positions, despite a mutual awareness and usage of a shared set of offices. No clear correlation exists between the offices used and the region, site size, or temporal positioning to indicate a simple patterning that underlay the choice of these particular positions.

The result is that despite using the common language of Late Classic governance, courts, and thus the ruling institutions of particular polities, looked different at different places. In understanding sociopolitical shifts throughout the Late Classic, I interpret these structural shifts as strategic—that is, representing attempts to respond to local circumstances. The temporal emergence of these titles supports the idea that they were gradually adopted and used over a period of time. Notably, rather than an unorganized or evolutionary process that led to the emergence of different positions at different moments, all of the titles appear in the texts and are used over similar time periods. In addition, the titles are formalized—that is, associated with formalized records of accession into office—from early on (table 9.2):¹ it is no accident that these titles take a place of political prominence in the Late Classic.

In thinking about these changes as enacted strategically, we can imagine polities having to make decisions about the number of courtly positions that were necessary or that could be supported within a local context. Rulers might have taken into account increasingly powerful local families that required an officially sanctioned outlet, or they may have enticed desirable locals into joining the formalized structure of polity governance through the prerogatives and status associated with these positions. Furthermore, given that these roles do seem to be differentiated in some way (i.e., they are not simply used interchangeably), whether in terms of meaning, duty, expertise, or other factors, it seems that polities were making choices about what roles were most needed by their communities or could best be filled

by the possible candidates at hand. As mentioned, for example, Yaxchilan seems to have drawn heavily upon sajals to help manage its complex organization of surrounding satellite sites. In contrast, Copán features a well-documented series of *ajk'uhuuns*, who apparently played important roles in that city's activities. This appears to have yielded a malleable and responsive system: a way for polities to shape-change as circumstances dictated, whether as a result of pressures of providing an outlet for an increasingly powerful noble or in response to ritual needs, political demands, or other governmental duties.

One other note is necessary in considering the ways the governing structures of polities looked different in different places. As we examine the distribution of these offices across the landscape, it is impossible to ignore the significant lacunae that emerge regarding places that do *not* record usage of the political titles on which this chapter focuses. During the Late Classic era, at the same time that many polities were expanding their institutional repertoire to include these offices, many other sites offer up no evidence that they bought into this trend. Issues of imperfect preservation are no doubt at play here, as well as the possibility that differences in local artistic or textual styles dictated alternate types of records that may have obscured the presence of non-ruling courtly members. (Such differences in preferred local genre are readily observed through different media emphasized at different sites: a predilection for sculpture in-the-round at Copán; a disinclination toward use of stelae at Palenque.)

Is it possible, however, that these absences are in some cases real? That is, that polities without a record of courtly positions did not undergo transformation toward the more inclusive concept of governance seen in many other places in the Late Classic? The independence of Maya polities means that it is indeed plausible to imagine divergences in their distinctive conceptions of government. The modified systems of governance that were adaptive in some locales may have been perceived as a liability or as ineffective at others.

BOUNDARIES AND DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN POLITIES

The discussion in this chapter has focused on how Late Classic governance and the institution of the court unfolded across the Maya lowlands. In conceptualizing Maya polities of this era from the perspective of official institutions, the common vocabulary used to articulate polity structures is truly striking. The variations just discussed, however, seem to emphasize difference between polities. What does this mean in terms of political boundaries or

integration of different polities? How did the Maya themselves understand this variation in terms of relationships between polities or the separate identities assigned them?

One way that boundaries between polities have been explored in earlier studies is through the mapping of Emblem Glyphs (Berlin 1958; Marcus 1976; Martin and Grube 1995; Mathews 1991; Schele and Mathews 1991), an approach that characterizes edges of different polities and the surrounding regions that were under their thrall. Textual and iconographic evidence supports the idea that each city-state saw itself as a singular, central place, revolving around the axis mundi of a particular *k'uhul ajaw*. The institution of the court, a source of authority and of idealized behaviors, similarly acted as a central political and religious focus within each city. The existence of different configurations of courts, as discussed, suggests that the replication of political structures apparent to the modern scholar was seen in ancient times as individualistic and reflecting local circumstance. That is, despite the clear presence of shared units of governance, polities used them in locally determined ways: this replication is not indicative of a wholesale imitation between polities, or what has been termed “organic solidarity”—cross-polity interdependence among social classes or occupational groups (to use Fox et al.’s [1996:798] words).

The suggestion that polities saw themselves as separate units should not, however, lead to a black-and-white view of difference in the Maya landscape, with absolute boundaries enforced or imagined between each place. Rather, the phenomenon of “satellite sites” clearly illustrates nuances in the degree of connectedness and identification occurring between polities. The very term indicates a modern effort to describe something ill-understood in terms of ancient Maya meanings. Examples like Yaxchilan and its multiple satellites—La Pasadita, Site R, and Laxtunich, all politically intertwined with Yaxchilan itself—show the close affiliation and political dependence between central sites and smaller entities nearby. At times, such satellite sites were governed by a *sajal*, acting as a type of lieutenant. For example, Ahkmo’ of Site R, a Yaxchilan satellite, appears to be a leader or lieutenant at the site. His connection to the central place of Yaxchilan, and the importance of his stable role at the subsidiary site, is underlined by his association with not just a single holy lord but rather with two rulers—Itsamnah Balaam II and, later, Bird Jaguar IV (figure 9.6). In his position as *sajal*, Ahkmo’ acted as a bridge during the liminal period of leadership change.

At other times, integration between sites is reflected by the role of the central ruler in confirming or supporting appointments at another site. These linkages were at times complex: this nesting could involve multiple layers. One

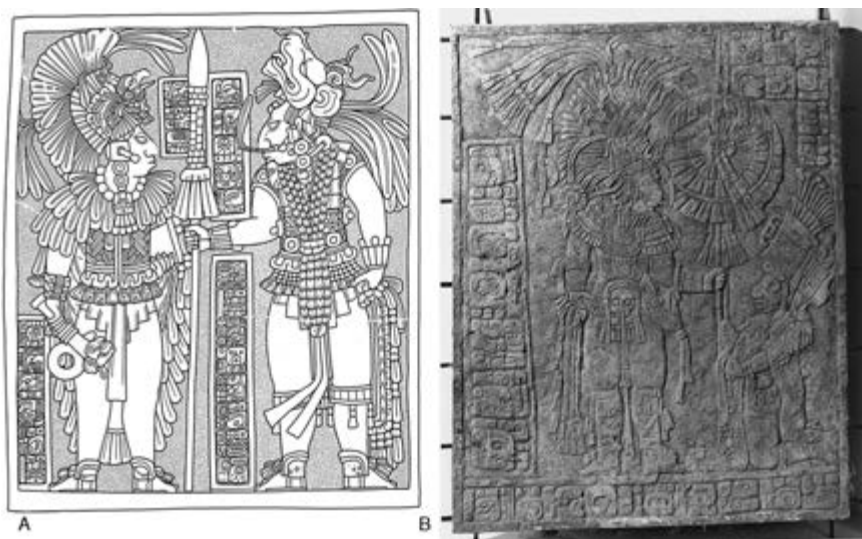


FIGURE 9.6. *Ahkmo'* of Site R, a *sajal* at a satellite site of Palenque and a courtly elite who bridged the reigns of two rulers—Lintel 1, Site R, with Itsamnab Balam II (drawing by Peter Mathews; reproduced with permission), and Lintel 3, Site R, with Bird Jaguar IV (photograph courtesy www.mayavase.com).

such example is that of Chan Panak, a *sajal* from El Cayo, whose accession is overseen by a Sak Tz'i' lord but who also makes a trip to Piedras Negras to visit the ruler there, Yopnal Ahk III, prior to taking office (figure 9.7). Here, sites were related, and were characterized by obligation, to each other at multiple levels. Even as polities saw themselves as bounded entities, it is not surprising to recognize important connections between them; the courtly positions that are the focus of this chapter provided a medium for both connection and hierarchical ranking between separate places.

We know that the Maya world did not represent a unified empire and that individual city-states were largely independent entities. From the perspective of official governing structures, polities were separate. Each one viewed itself as central within its worldview and as distinct in identity. However, this separation does not yield an utterly fragmented or insular landscape in political terms. Sites situated at different places in a broader settlement hierarchy understood themselves to be closely connected to neighboring polities in a way that impacted the enactment of local governance and likely other cultural processes as well.

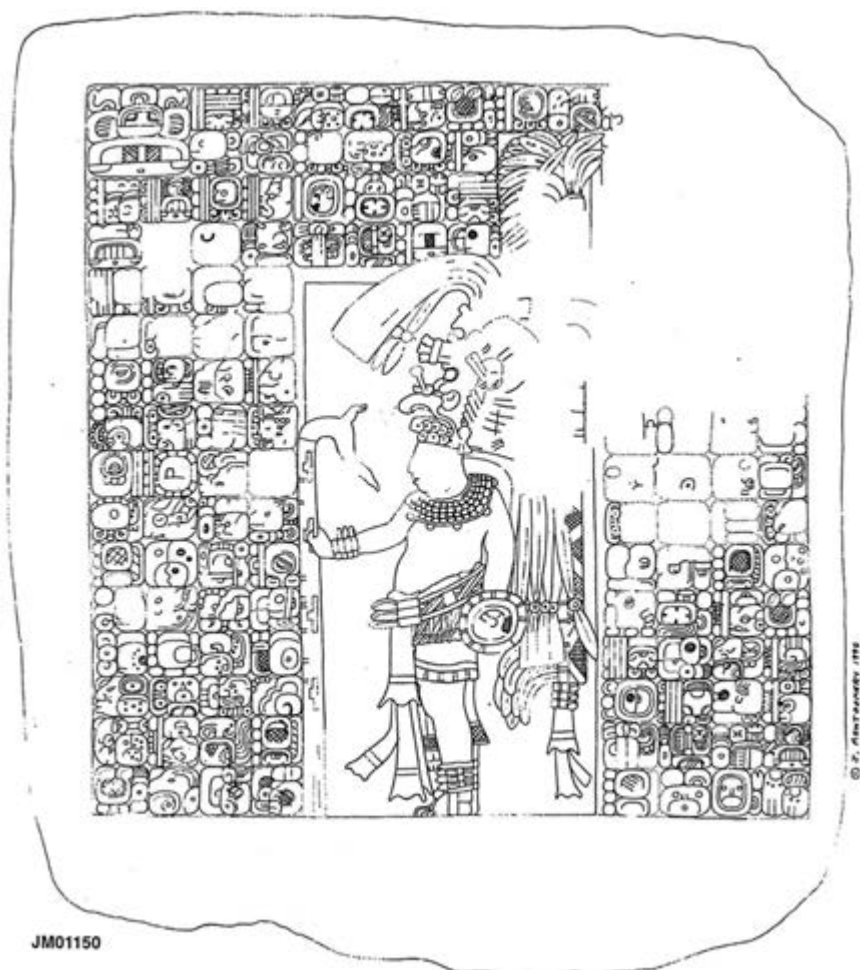


FIGURE 9.7. *Chan Panak, a sajal from El Cayo with connections to both Sak Tz'i' and Piedras Negras—El Cayo, Lintel 1 (drawing by John Montgomery; © 2000 John Montgomery).*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I examine polities as defined by their official structures and as recorded in textual sources. That is, the royal court is used as a proxy for the organized framework of Late Classic polities, providing an identifiable and comparable structure for looking at conceptions of the city-state across the Maya lowlands. (Let me reiterate that this is only one possible lens on

the idea of the “polity,” necessarily yielding a partial perspective on the topic, and it is intended to complement the other varied perspectives offered in the chapters of this volume.) As mentioned, a shared language is at work—analogue positions are employed across a wide range of sites, representing a political vocabulary of this era and an understanding of what a polity “should” look like. This shared language is a Mayan one—the view of governance explored in this chapter specifically privileges emic (and elite-oriented, given the nature of textual sources) perspectives on how polities were structured and organized. Yet, configurations are locally determined, with great variety in the forms official structures take. In some ways this is not surprising: for example, in the realm of Maya religion, what we describe as the Maya world is a space of cultural commonalities simultaneously marked by local variants in actual practice. What *is* particularly notable and perhaps surprising about the data examined here is that a change in a cultural structure that emerged over a fairly short period of time was disseminated quickly and adopted by polities across a wide area. This indicates the strength of linkages between sites and the extent to which non-material goods traveled among them. The interactions between individualistically understood places are highlighted through this process. Since a central authority did not mandate such shifts, the adoption of a modified ruling structure was apparently perceived as desirable and necessary in many places, as polities adapted to changing circumstances.

Let us take a wider view now, in contextualizing these suggestions, and turn to the larger debates the chapters in this volume address. The centralized/decentralized descriptive dichotomy has often been seen as lying at the heart of how we characterize and understand polities, yet, as others in this volume observe, the distinctions between these organizational models may be located as much in issues of evidence or scale as in ancient realities. When I consider where textual data position me in relation to these models, I find that neither one adequately describes the official version I examine. Analytically, I lean toward the wider focus of a decentralized model, in which structural units (represented in the present chapter by components of the royal court) are replicated across the lowlands. However, like centralists, I do not see the governance of polities as a lineage-based system devoid of bureaucratic elements: the operation of repeated and formalized courtly positions is a clear step toward bureaucratization of offices. Rather, by the Late Classic period, each city-state embodied a profoundly central space, representing loci in the landscape for political, religious—and, we may safely extrapolate, economic and subsistence—activities.

Ultimately, the centralized/decentralized dichotomy is not terribly compelling or, for that matter, revealing. As Arthur Demarest (1996) points out in his closing comment in response to Fox and colleagues' article on segmentary versus centralized states, there are a number of ways we might think about reframing this debate and the questions we ask surrounding it. Demarest (*ibid.*:821) points out a variety of other models beyond these two that could potentially be useful in describing Classic era organization and reminds us that variability is a key characteristic to track and examine, not one that should be shoe-horned into an ill-fitting model.

In fact, variability emerges very clearly in the data above as a way shared structures are implemented in different places. Significantly, this is information drawn solely from textual sources, which runs counter to the assumption that epigraphic data will tend to mask variation, while archaeological or settlement data will illuminate these differences. We see here the possibilities emerging from examining textually derived data not just as anecdotal evidence but also as composite information. This is not to downplay the critical importance of integrating multiple lines of evidence, but it does suggest that particular types of evidence do not necessarily dictate a certain conclusion. Using hieroglyphic data allows for an emic perspective on ancient Maya polities that is derived from that era—thereby not suffering from some of the chronological and interpretive issues surrounding the application of ethnohistoric data to these topics.

How might the conversation about models for Classic Maya polities be meaningfully reconfigured? Referring again to Demarest, he points out that the notable variation in structure across the Maya world may be in part connected to the volatility that characterizes Maya polities over time: leaders would have experimented with different formations in their quest for stability (*ibid.*). This is a compelling idea, reminding us of the frequent connections between variation and change in structures (i.e., the interrelated presence of multiple forms and of directional movement). The prominence of the institution of the royal court in the Late Classic era—a time of power shifts, environmental threats, and other societal uncertainties—might suggest that it is an experimental form that was found to have worked and thus that spread more widely across the landscape. Rather than employ descriptive models that often appear to fall short in accommodating the range of manifestations found (across space and through differing types of evidence), we might consider the various forms of polities observed as responses and adaptations to particular circumstances. With this perspective, we can attempt to characterize the causes of, or explanations for, variation across the Maya world.

In closing, I turn my gaze briefly to the nature of the “official perspective” examined in this chapter—what it offers and what it leaves out. I have argued that one useful way to look at polities is through their official and formally articulated governing structures. I believe this is a useful starting point because it represents the formalized version with which actual practice would be compared or to which it would be referenced. However, this outlook clearly omits a variety of perspectives on polities, including the “nonofficial stories” of the many inhabitants of ancient Maya settlements who would have had little or no direct relationship to or experience with the court. Here, we must expect an additional level of variation in terms of emic conceptions of the polity, especially since it remains uncertain to what extent corporate identity was experienced outside of the immediate reach of the court. In particular, contrasting the court’s textual version of the polity with the literal and metaphorical orientation (as materially measured) of people located at increasing distances from this central space may help to reveal productive discrepancies between the written landscape, representing the view from the top, and the experience of the many.

NOTE

1. The one exception to this pattern is the *sajal* title, perhaps indicating that this frequently used title derived from a different historical process.

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Were boundaries between political units actually recognized, and by whom? Did “secondary” or “satellite” centers see themselves as such, and were they perceived as subordinate by larger political entities? To a large extent, these questions revolve around how much control the rulers of ancient Maya politics actually had over their subjects and whether these subjects really identified with particular political units. Much of the debate surrounding this level of control has centered on centralized or decentralized models of authority (Chase and Chase 1996; Fox and Cook 1996; Fox et al. 1996), which, taken to their most extreme, promote views of non-elites in one of two rather strange ways: either they are all abject servants to a kleptocratic, dynamically and proactively savvy group of elites or they are mostly independent, poor-yet-empowered peasants who negotiate, organize, and legitimize economic and political relationships—with a group of rather tepid “elites” bearing prestige goods—at every turn. The chapters in this volume have argued that the centralized and decentralized models of Maya politics do not have to be placed in opposition to one another (Fox et al. 1996) and are actually the result of different types of analyses taking place at Maya sites (sometimes even the same site, as in chapter 7; Canuto and Fash 2004). As Kovacevich notes in chapter 2, they may be viewed as two parts of the same basic, complementary whole (Blanton et al. 1996; Bourdieu 1977; Earle 1991; Giddens 1984; Marcus 1998; Saitta 1999).

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The centralized and decentralized models of political authority in the Maya area are somewhat damaging, not just because of the polarization they have created among scholars and within scholarship but because they promote a vision of politics that in any era, let alone during the epoch of Classic Maya civilization, would be unrealistic. The Maya past—on the level of political organization—cannot be reduced to a single, one-dimensional model precisely because it is not something we can fix to one event, one government, or one ruler. If we could, we would shortly have nothing to study. Reducing the political world of the Maya to either a centralized *or* a decentralized model thus strips the past of its immediacy: the struggling dynastic rulers at La Sufricaya, the elites at Cancuen, and the farmers of Chan, among others, were creatures of circumstance and not static, immortal slaves to a model designed to encompass the approximately 600 years of Classic Maya civilization and the entirety of the southern lowlands. Are there large, valid models we can create about the Maya, in terms of general statements about beliefs, ideas, or behaviors? Of course. But in terms of political organization, creating a situation where we choose between one of two binary opposites seems overly simplistic: the fortunes of a given site and its inhabitants—as we well know from both material culture and the epigraphic record—fluctuated greatly, and as a result we believe that chaining a polity to one of the extreme poles of social complexity is a fundamentally bad idea. In fact, internal as well as geographic variability seems to have been the norm in the political world of the Classic Maya.

As we mention in chapter 1, definitions of the Classic Maya polity—as derived from ethnohistoric, archaeological, and epigraphic data—revolve around three basic concepts: place, community, and political authority (government). As we also note, while Western conceptions of “territory” were largely absent until the colonial period (Okoshi-Harada 2012; Smith 2005), terms like *city*, *state*, and *hinterland* were probably connected to one another and not particularly autonomous entities, especially in the minds of Classic Maya elites: written conventions like Emblem Glyphs seem to have been created to convey the idea that place (local as well as regional), authority, and (possibly) community were one and the same.

As Marken notes in chapter 5, preindustrial concepts of community did not generally make a distinction between the urban and rural domains; what we are dealing with, Marken argues, is not an urban core and a rural hinterland. These are archaeological constructs we use to talk about ancient societies, but they would not necessarily have been real categories to the people living in a Maya polity. What Marken is suggesting is that we likely had political

arrangements of urban-rural communities where “cities” were not conceptually distinguished from their surrounding, supporting countrysides. To be sure, the civic-ceremonial heart of a polity would have been recognizable—socially, economically, architecturally, and conceptually—as the place where the ruler and the court were situated. As Marken suggests, however, there would not have been a “clear political and cultural separation” between the urban categories we use to describe places like Tikal, El Peru-*Waka*, and other major centers. We might even envision a situation where, in the mind-set of a Maya lord or a rural farmer, the state *was* the capital, the capital *was* the hinterland, and the hinterland *was* the state. The key word here, of course, is *mind-set*. We would argue that a Classic Maya polity only exists if there is a shared sense of place, a shared sense of community, a shared sense of authority. The basic recognition—by multiple parties, both internally and externally—that the polity exists is what gives it meaning. This idea is actually a common thread throughout the chapters in this volume and one we will explore a bit further here.

THE INTERNAL CONSTRUCTION OF POLITY

In chapter 2, Kovacevich uses Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to explain how social identity was constructed at Cancuen. She makes the case that elites, commoners, and other social groupings at the site had different notions of what was prestigious, that what was considered valuable for defining social identity depended upon what group one belonged to. These values, in part, were the result of elites restricting not only technology and ritual knowledge but also certain types of (elite-focused) prestige goods, which they used to set themselves apart from the larger population. The implication here, of course, is that non-elites crafted their identities from other sources and, in their own way, reproduced their existing social structure. In this way, their social milieu was both affected by and independent from the elite sphere.

At the heart of this argument is the idea of habitus, or that values, dispositions, and expectations are acquired—actively and passively—through everyday experience. Bourdieu (1990:66–67) defines habitus as created by systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures—that is, as principles that generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them. In a sense, then, everyday participation in a social structure maintains and even creates that structure. One might view the real power of Maya elites, as Kovacevich notes, by their ability to influence

the ways those structures behaved. It is not just what types of activities people were participating in but what types of behaviors and everyday experiences they were excluded from that contribute to habitus.

If we extend this concept of habitus to Maya political units, then what we might be left with is a sociopolitical system that is, as Elizabeth Graham (2012) has suggested, both hierarchical and heterarchical. It is hierarchical in that there *are* groups of people influencing the “structured structures” of society and relying upon the interplay among prestige goods, public ritual, and ideology for their authority over others. But it is heterarchical in that social relations are created, maintained, negotiated, and transformed largely without a clear, overarching mandate: it is difficult to imagine a group of Classic Maya elites “consciously aiming” or (perhaps more important) effectively enforcing a set of values, dispositions, and expectations upon an unsuspecting populace. Beyond hierarchy and heterarchy, moreover, we might look to habitus as a way to explain the type of mind-set referred to earlier. After all, if we view habitus as a kind of organizing principle for societies and social groupings, might it not be that the polity is not a fixed territory but rather an idea achieved through lived experience? In this case, everyday participation in the polity would create “values, dispositions, and expectations” for the people living within it. As Marken notes in chapter 5, a Maya polity was both a “social community” and a place that local people, both urban and rural, identified with. So yes, the polity is “at its core a collection of households” (Murtha, chapter 3). But it is also a collection of ideas. It is an agreed upon, if negotiated, constellation of ideas about ownership and place. As a shared set of concepts as well as relationships between the urban and rural sectors, Maya polities would have been complex in terms of their internal organization.

As Murtha notes in chapter 3, there is little evidence at places like Tikal and Caracol that Classic Maya rulers had any real direct control over the agrarian landscape or the products of that landscape; instead, it would appear that agrarian households, on the order of lineages, controlled the production of and access to the majority of agricultural goods. He suggests that the models used to suggest centralized organization at Tikal and Caracol—based upon defensive earthworks as well as *bajo* usage for the former and causeways, terraces, and satellite centers for the latter—are unnecessarily limited and do not account for the full range of agents, actors, negotiations, and decisions that led to the creation of ancient Maya polities. In short, households were messy affairs, and if we view them as such, then the negotiations between state and lineage organizations would have been not only paramount (after all, everyone—even elites—needed to eat) but also very complex.

Robin and her colleagues make this case in chapter 4, where we find a farming community—Chan—not only directing its own intensification of agriculture and its own production but also establishing ties to several powers in the Belize River Valley, potentially playing them off against one another. As much as Chan was subordinate to the late regional capital of Xunantunich, for example, it was likely able to develop some form of logistical constraint on the dynasts there. We see something similar in chapter 3, where networks of households and farming communities are actively participating in the ebb and flow of the Caracol polity. Murtha sees the expansion and integration of polities like this one as fluid and dynamic, subject to local negotiations as well as external factors. Of course, one cannot deny that places like Xunantunich, Caracol, and Tikal were engaged in behaviors that we would see as centralized or hierarchical, such as long-distance militarism, exchange of prestige goods, and political intrigue. But it would seem that everyday participation in the polity—that inherently social, shared set of lived experiences we might call *habitus*—involved a lot more negotiation than we might have imagined twenty years ago. Emery and Foias (2012), as well as Graham (2012), recently made a similar case for the mid-sized polity of Motul de San Jose. There, political units that we might deem “secondary centers” were both part of a larger political unit and somewhat independent from it, in terms of economic behavior: based on the material culture at both Motul and its surrounding centers and hamlets, they have suggested that secondary centers were partially, but unevenly, integrated into the Motul polity. Likewise, they have suggested that at Motul, political centralization need not be equated with centralized control over an economic infrastructure and that politically decentralized polities do not automatically equate with a lack of elite involvement in production, exchange, or other economic behavior. In other words, they decouple politics and economics at Motul, essentially creating a vision of a polity where different parts of its internal organization function in centralized and decentralized (or hierarchical and heterarchical) ways.

What chapters 3 and 4 of the present volume demonstrate is that this type of internal organization can occur on a much larger scale, even within the very polities that dominated the lowland political order during the Classic period. We suggest, based on these and other chapters in the volume, that one cannot have a stable economically and politically “decoupled” polity where secondary centers and hamlets are *continually* participating in, and negotiating their relationships to, a larger political order. This is, by definition, an unstable arrangement, as all the parties involved (and likely the specific needs of those parties) change over time. The fluidity that Murtha finds at Tikal and Caracol,

as well as the production controls Robin and her colleagues see at Chan, are inherently destabilizing forces from the perspective of a Maya dynast. To be sure, following Fredrik Barth (1969), we might say that economic transactions between different groups would, out of necessity, create a collective vision of political and cultural as well as economic ties, with the growth of similar values and shared ideas about the larger group as a whole. The ties binding people at Tikal, Caracol, and Xunantunich would thus, in a sense, be formed through continual shared interactions and social behaviors.

However, Tikal and Caracol, as well as many other large polities of the Maya area, were long-lived political institutions where Xunantunich was not. The latter was, for whatever reason, unable to remain dominant for long and was, by comparison, a very short-lived polity. Whatever ties bound the people together at Xunantunich were simply not enough to create a long-term arrangement. As a result, the implication of both the Chan and the Tikal-Caracol arguments is that in spite of their lack of control over the agrarian economy, one that was dominated by household and lineage organizations, dynasts at certain sites were able to make things work. They were, for whatever reason, able to extract resources from their polities and deaden the destabilizing effects that seem to have stifled places like Xunantunich. In a sense, this is the heart of the centralized-decentralized debate: scholars are essentially arguing over the possibility and importance—or impossibility and unimportance—of negotiations among different social, economic, and political levels.

Could there have been places that were centralized not only politically but also economically, where rulers had a rather direct hand in establishing regional outposts or, say, the general economic character of the urban zone over which they ruled? Might we find locations where the ties between different groups—essentially the glue linking kinship and kingship together—were based on far more than just negotiated relationships between lineages and rulers or ideology and ritual (e.g., see Aoyama 2001:357)? Sure. At the same time, we find scholars (chapter 3, for example), arguing for heterarchy and the presence of qualities that could be described as “segmentary” at Tikal and Caracol. These are sites that have been scholarly bastions of the argument for centralized sociopolitical and economic complexity. How to reconcile these disparities? How can Maya rulers directly create their urban zones, have a direct hand in such behaviors as resource extraction or trade, and yet still be negotiating with lineage leaders, allowing (or coping with) the organic intensification of agriculture on the household level, and suffering from at least a partial inability to regulate basic farming communities like Chan? A situation where all of these issues are happening at once during

the Classic period not only sounds possible but indeed probable. Complex societies are just that: complex.

Arguing that one is segmentary at all times or unitary at all times, with equivalent strength and capability in all areas at all times, does not seem to make much sense. One would not and could not make this argument for any state in the real world. As a result, we would argue that the critical knife, as applied solely to one or the other, cuts both ways. We suspect that it is not so much a question of whether we are dealing with one or the other (centralized/unitary or decentralized/segmentary) but rather to what degree and when in time we are viewing the fortunes (or misfortunes) of a polity. If we view political organization as *decoupled* from economic organization and place each type of organization on a different spectrum, then what we get are multiple indexes of behavior (at least some of which are disconnected from one another; we do not necessarily need to cross any of the lines or link them together). We get a situation where, for example, a site can be politically unitary, economically segmentary, or any wide combination thereof depending upon when in time we are looking at it. Obviously, such indexes cannot be strictly quantified (we are not advocating a return to processual archaeology here), but they might provide a better alternative to the “either-or” situations we sometimes find ourselves in (Marken and Straight 2007).

PERSPECTIVES OF POLITY

One of the themes of this volume involves perspective: at various points, the authors of the individual chapters employ what they call “bottom-up” or “top-down” perspectives to analyze what the polity was and what it meant to the people living in it. Many of the early chapters, for example, take a “bottom-up” perspective and look to how rural or elite households functioned within the larger political unit. They look at the relationship—or lack thereof—between local economies and political behavior and explore how communities respond to social, political, or economic change.

One of the criticisms levied against “top-down” perspectives is that they can smooth over existing differences between and within polities, whereby we mistake “Maya polity” for the written opinions and material culture of a ruling minority. Yet the last four chapters in this volume are explicitly “top-down,” and for good reason: one of the problems with “bottom-up” perspectives is that they tend to reduce “rulership” to something more akin to “stewardship.” A Maya king was not the first among equals. De-emphasizing the authoritarian nature of Maya kingship when one is speaking of the daily

lives of rural households is certainly valid, but ultimately most of us agree that there were Classic Maya kings, that they were involved in the creation of (sometimes) massive civic-ceremonial centers, and that they did “rule” (or thought they did) over an urban-rural population. When we talk about politics and the meanings of polities, we cannot avoid the people who ultimately engaged in the most visible, overtly political acts. As such, if we are to remain true to the cause of exploring what Maya polities were, we need both “bottom-up” and “top-down” perspectives. The former reminds us that ultimately we are dealing with social communities and collections of households, with internal variation and nuanced political as well as economic behavior, whereas the latter forces us to examine whether we are actually dealing with a coherent whole. If we do not approach the polity from both perspectives, we are theoretically poorer for it.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 explore ideas about polities from the latter perspective. In chapter 6, Maca argues that Copan did not see true urbanization or major population growth until the mid- to late sixth century AD and that these developments were related to the larger geopolitical struggles of the so-called Middle Classic. He also suggests that “foreign” or “non-local” peoples played a prominent role in this urbanization, highlighting the results of excavations in the Bosque at Tomb 68-1, which contained a high-status foreigner buried in the style of distant Teotihuacan. The Bosque, like many other areas outside the site core, was heavily modified in the late Late Classic. Maca interprets these building activities (particularly U-Groups at Copan) as explicit attempts by rulers—notably, the last major ruler of Copan, Yax Pasaj—to replicate and refer to the architectural program within the site core. In the case of the Bosque, he suggests that Yax Pasaj was referencing events from the distant past, including those that led to the placement of Tomb 68-1, increased urbanization, and the increased ties—real or perceived—with Teotihuacan. In other words, he was mobilizing memory to reinvent the polity.

Tokovinine and Estrada-Belli explore a similar theme in chapter 7. They examine how the rulers of La Sufricaya, near the site of Holmul, tried to create a new political identity for themselves. They attempted to create a central location—a palace and associated public as well as private compounds—that was both a stage for public events and a retreat for the highest of the elites in a place that had a preexisting social and political order. The rulers employed a number of strategies in the creation of their emergent Early Classic political center, as evidenced in its architectural planning, building types, murals, and monuments. And yet, as Tokovinine and Estrada-Belli note, their endeavor failed: the lords of La Sufricaya, unlike those of other places like Copan, were

somehow unable to incorporate or co-opt that earlier order to create a long-term political entity. What went wrong? In short, the efforts by the dynastic authorities at La Sufricaya to create and maintain a royal identity there failed, and at the highest level possible. In a sense, Tokovinine and Estrada-Belli are making the case that the rulers of La Sufricaya had power but lacked the authority to ensure their long-term survival: they had a strategy, but ultimately it did not work.

In chapter 8, Fitzsimmons draws upon classic sociological theories of authority as well as indigenous views of political power—as represented in hieroglyphic texts—to further explore the types of strategies employed by Classic Maya rulers. He argues that we should adopt a flexible model (i.e., one that allows for a spectrum of political complexity and some mobility along that spectrum for a given site) in which the personal, ephemeral abilities of Maya rulers played a major role in how political units were defined and conceptualized by their inhabitants. By accumulating sociopolitical capital through these “charismatic” abilities, successful rulers could then emphasize other strategies, such as the “traditional” use of ancestors to support claims to the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of the living (e.g., see McAnany 1995:37–38) or the “rational-legal” creation of regional outposts like El Paraíso (Canuto, Sharer, and Bell 2003) to establish rough boundary areas as well as places for resource extraction. Unfortunately, not all rulers were able to do this. Fitzsimmons argues that like the dynasts at La Sufricaya, the Late Classic rulers of Hiix Witz (Zapote Bobal) were relying on an untenable strategy for creating political identity and were likewise unable to translate power into long-term authority. He suggests that political units like Hiix Witz were primarily “charismatic polities,” relying upon charismatic sources of authority almost to the exclusion of rational-legal or even traditional ones. To an extent, this concept of Maya polities relying upon ephemeral, ruler-specific qualities for things like boundaries, as well as relationships within and between sites, might explain the dynamic, fluid (even volatile) characteristics of polities mentioned in earlier chapters. The difference here is that we are seeing similar conclusions but from an explicitly “top-down” perspective.

Chapter 9 likewise explores Maya polities from the “top-down” perspective of Maya epigraphy, but it does so by examining the titles and roles of primarily Late Classic government officials. Like Fitzsimmons, Jackson argues that Classic Maya polities not only varied—in terms of their organization—across the lowlands but also changed over time, sometimes rather erratically. And yet there appear to have been common elements to governmental structures across space and time, or what Jackson calls “building blocks” of governance.

In other words, there were titles, bureaucratic positions, and official roles that would have been mutually comprehensible across the Maya area, suggesting geographically shared notions of what a polity was. It also suggests that there were shared ideas about what government was and what it was not and what the relationship between different ranks of elites was.

At the same time, Jackson notes that there was considerable variation between different polities, sometimes at places relatively close to one another. She observes that despite having a common language of government, despite the “building blocks,” royal courts were not homogeneous and different titles could appear at different places. There are two ways to explain this. One might be that rulers, like those at La Sufricaya and Hiix Witz, were strategically adapting to local realities. In this model, rulers would be tailoring their bureaucratic needs to suit different interest groups, political organizations, or economic behaviors. We might imagine a dynast in this situation selectively choosing aspects from the common language of government (the “building blocks”) that fit his (or her) circumstances. A second explanation, one that is possible but arguably homogenizing for Maya polities, would be that rulers were not so much selecting the bureaucratic positions that fit but that many of these positions were in evidence and only some were actually represented on Maya sculpture. This model might involve a ruler mentioning certain individuals and their titles (and omitting others) for political expediency (which, we are fairly sure, *never* happened). Jackson asks whether the absences actually reflect difference, and although we cannot know for sure, we do know that different sites emphasize different aspects of kingship in their inscriptions: the “common language” of inscriptions extends, of course, far beyond the titular realm. In the end, then, it would seem there was a common sense of what a polity was for the ancient Maya: it was a dynamic, fluid social community in which hierarchy as well as heterarchy flourished, a place characterized by a common language of ideas, political realities, and economic behaviors.

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